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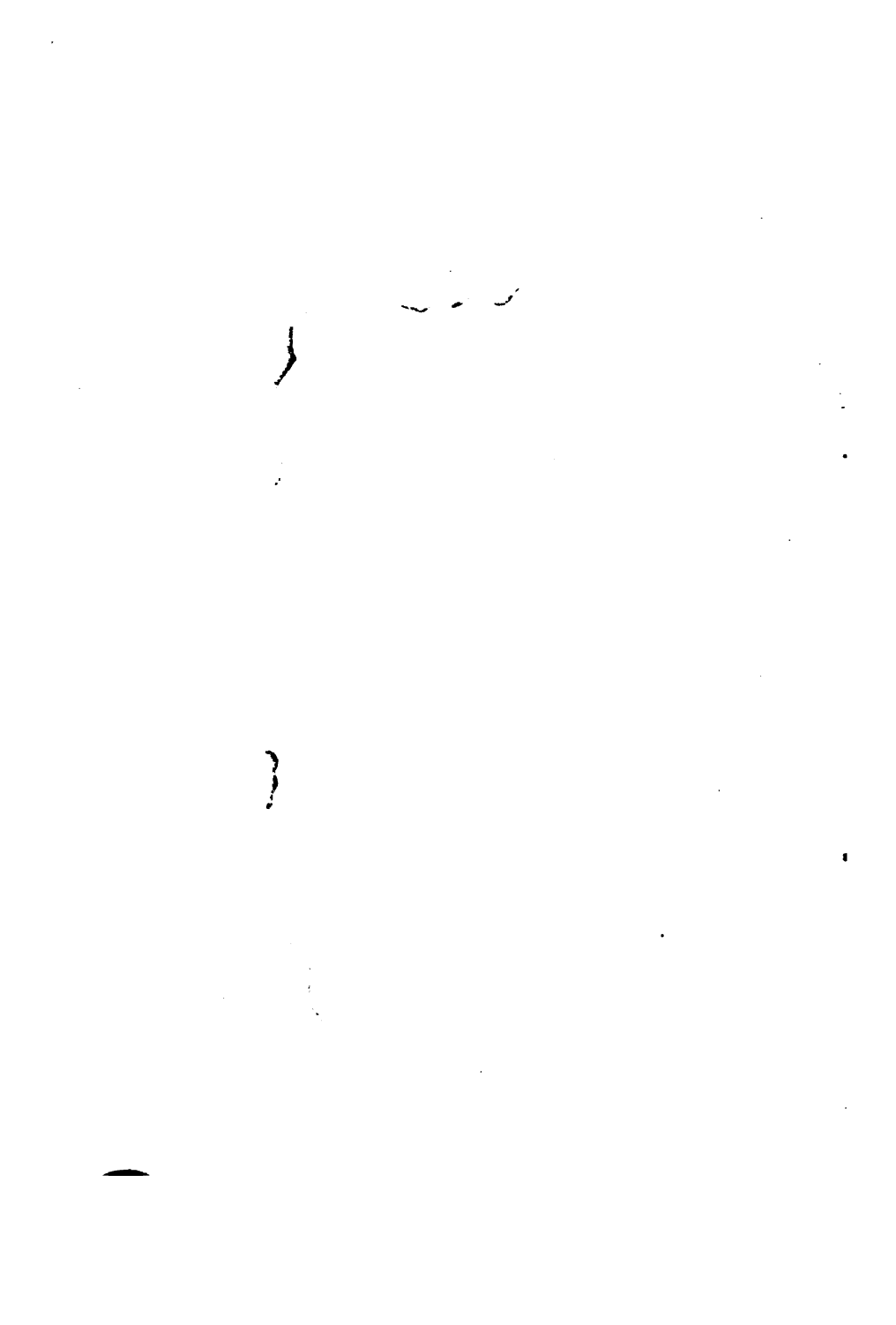


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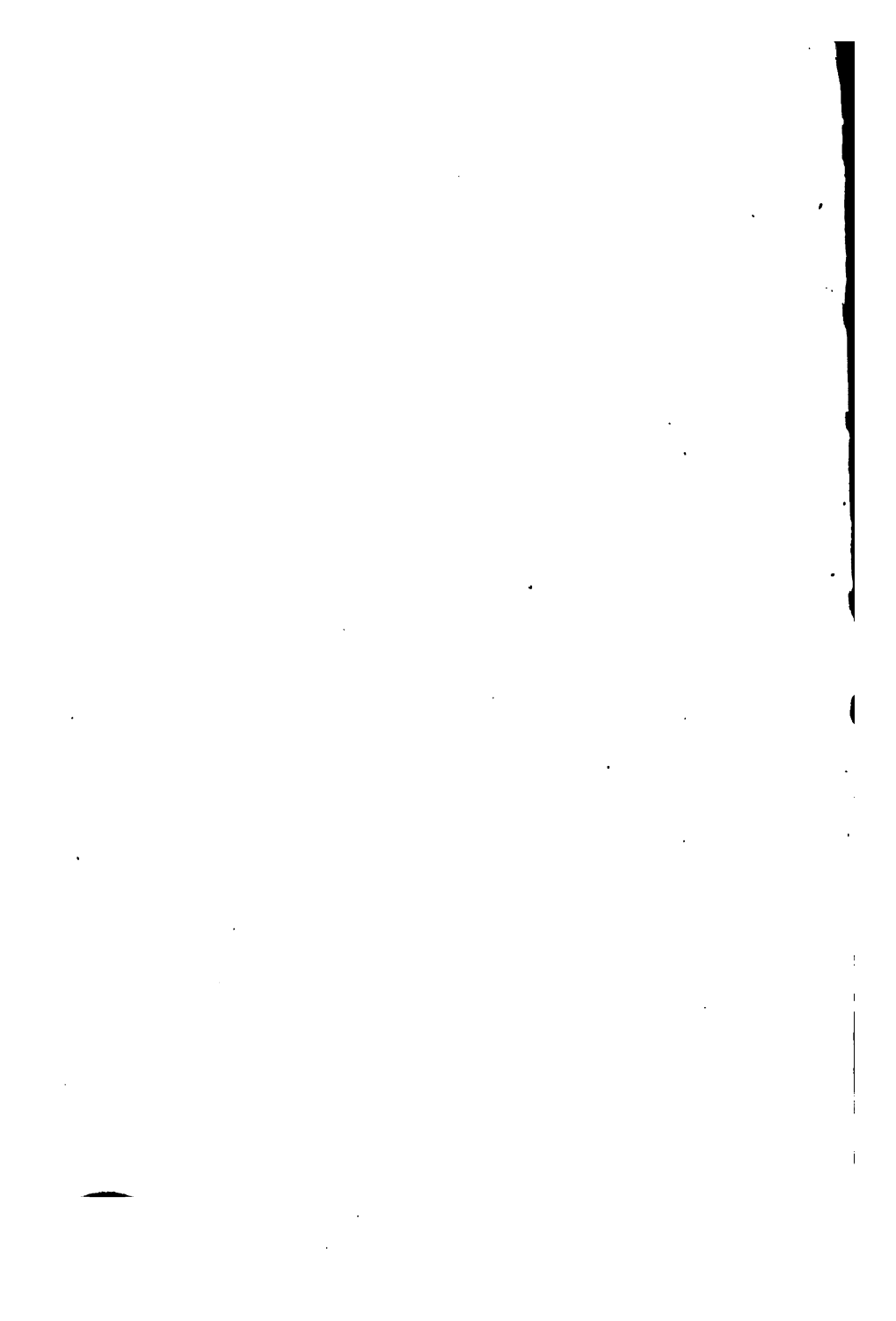
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Music After the Great War



SECOND EDITION

Music
After the Great War

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CARL VAN VECHTEN

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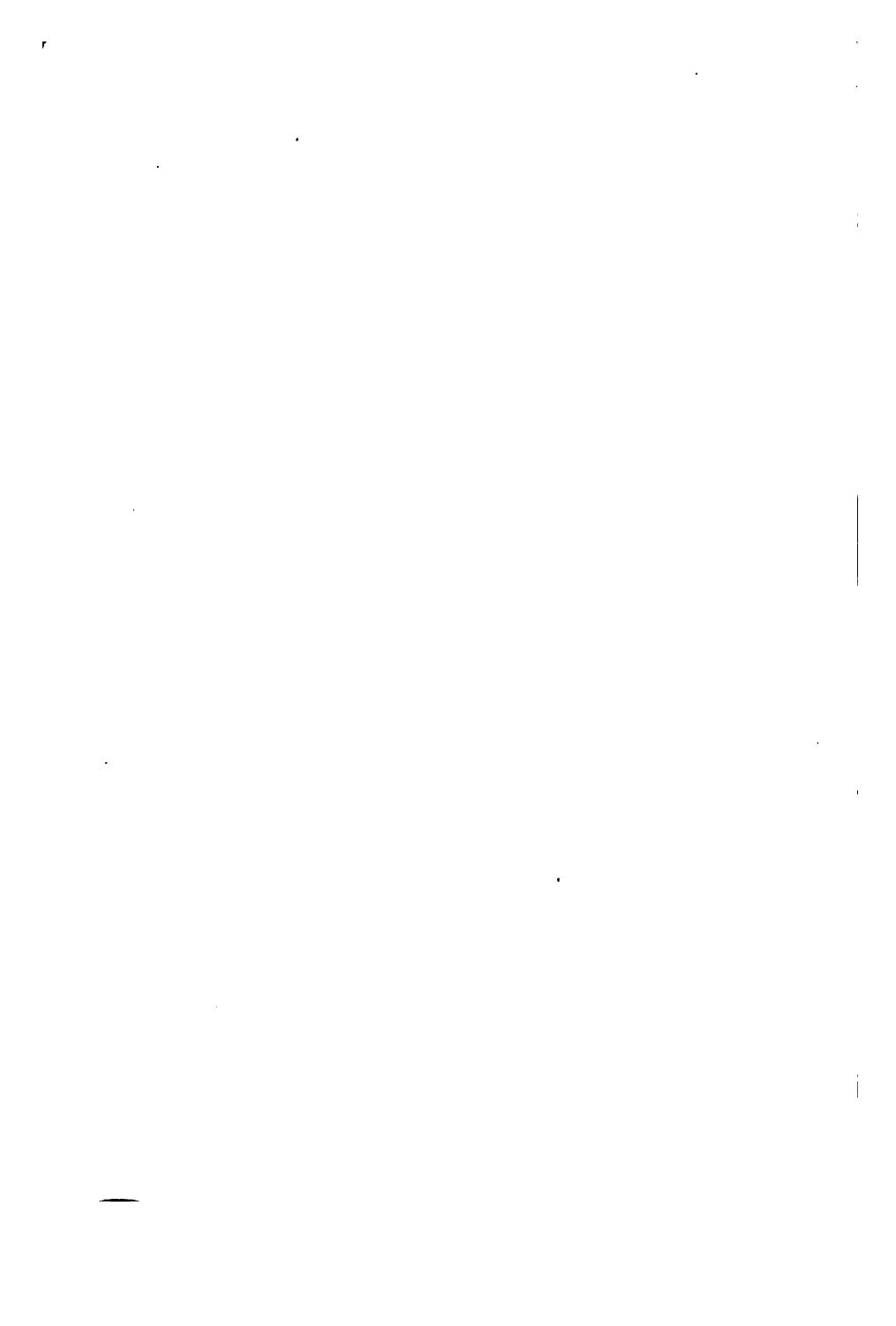
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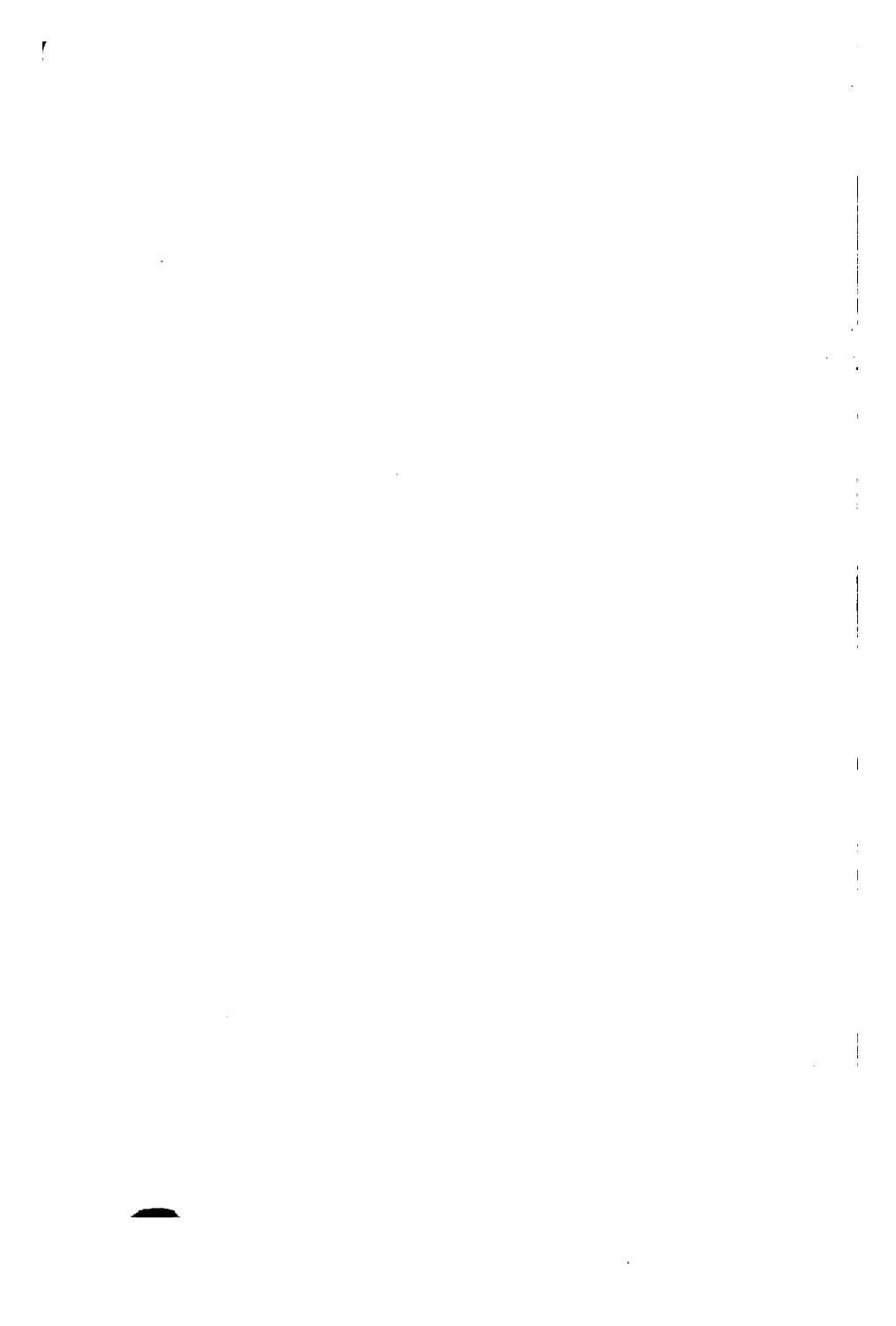
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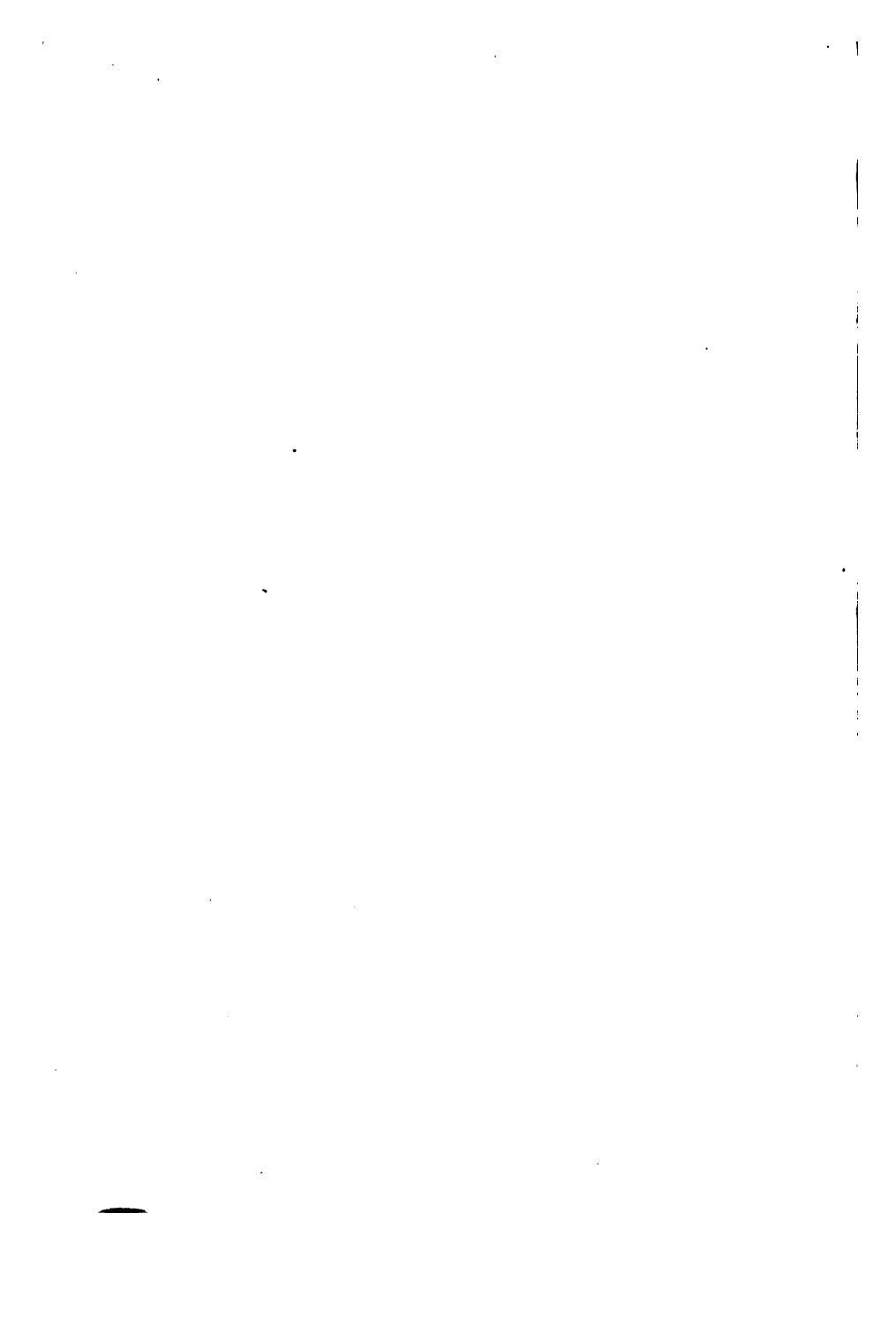


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Music After the Great War



Music After the Great War

WHEN the great war was declared, Leo Stein, in Florence at the time, asserted that the day of the cubists, the futurists, and their ilk was at an end. "After the war," he said, "there will be no more of this nonsense. Matisse may survive, and Picasso in his 'early manner,' but Renoir and Cézanne are the last of the great painters, and it is on their work that the new art, whatever it may be, will be founded." Leo Stein belongs to a family which, in a sense, has stood sponsor for the new painters, but his remarks can scarcely be called disinterested, as his Villa di Doccia in Florence contains no paintings at present but those of Renoir and Cézanne. There are mostly Renoirs.

Of course a general remark like this in regard to painting is based on an idea that there is no connection—at least no legitimate connection—between the painting of Marcel Duchamp, Gleizes, Derain, Picabia, and the later work of Picasso, and the painters (completely legitimized by now) who came before them. Without arguing this misconception, it may be stated that a similar misconcep-

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tion exists in relation to "modern" music. There are those who feel that the steady line of progression from Bach, through Beethoven and Brahms, has broken off somewhere. The exact point of departure is not agreed upon. Some say that music as an art ended with Richard Wagner's death. There are only a few, however, who do not include Brahms and Tschaikowsky in the list of those graced with the crown of genius. There are many who are generous enough to believe that Richard Strauss and Claude Debussy have carried on the divine torch. But there are only a few discerning enough to perceive that Strawinsky and Schoenberg have gone only a step further than the so-called impressionists in music.

Since the beginnings of music, as an art-form, there has always been a complaint that contemporary composers could not write melody. Beethoven suffered from this complaint; Wagner suffered from it; we have only recently gone through the period when Strauss and Debussy suffered from it. The reason is an obvious one. Each new composer has made his own rules of composition. Each has progressed a step further in his use of harmony. Now it is evident that in this

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way novelty lies, for an entirely new unaccompanied melody would be difficult to devise. It is in the combination of melody and harmony that a composer may show his talent at invention. It is but natural that any advance in this direction should at first startle unaccustomed ears, and it is by no means uncertain that this first thrill is not the most delicious sensation to be derived from hearing music. In time harmony is exhausted—combinations of notes in ordered forms—but there is still the pursuit of disharmony to be made. We are all quite accustomed to occasional discords, even in the music of Beethoven, where they occur very frequently. Strauss utilizes discords skillfully in his tonal painting; in such works as *Elektra* and *Heldenleben* they abound. The newer composers have almost founded a school on disharmony.

To me it seems certain that it is the men who have given the new impetus to tonal art in the past five years who will make the opening for whatever art-music we are to hear after the war, and I am referring even to occasional pieces after the manner of Tschaiikowsky's overture, 1812, in which the Russian National Anthem puts to rout the *Marseillaise*. . . . Perhaps it will be Karol

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Szymanowski of Poland (if he is still alive) or a new César Franck in Belgium who will rise to write of the intensity of suffering through which his country has struggled. But it seems to me beyond a doubt that music after the great war will be "newer" (I mean, of course, more primitive) than it was in the last days of July, 1914. There will be plenty of disharmonies, foreshadowed by Schoenberg and Strawinsky, let loose on our ears, but, in spite of the protests of Mr. Runciman, I submit that these disharmonies are a steady progression from Wagner, and not a freakish whim of an abnormal devil. I do not predict a return to Mozart as one result of the war.

There are always those prone to believe that such a war as is now in progress has been brought about by an anarchic condition among the artists, as foolish a theory as one could well promulgate, and keep one's mental balance. It is this group which steadfastly maintains that, after the war, things will be not merely as they were immediately before the war broke out, but as they were *fifty* years before. Now, it should be apparent to anyone but the oldest inhabitant that the music dramas of Richard Wagner are aging rapidly. Public in-

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terest in them is on the decline, thanks to an absurd recognition, in some degree or other, everywhere from Bayreuth to Paris, from Madrid to New York, of what is known as the "Master's tradition." Some of this tradition has been invented by Frau Cosima Liszt von Bülow Wagner and all of it is guaranteed to put the Wagner plays rapidly in a class with the operas of Donizetti and Bellini, stalking horses for prima donnas trained in a certain school. Without going into particulars which would clog this issue, it may be stated that the tradition includes matters pertaining to scenery, staging, lighting, acting, singing, and even *tempi* in the orchestra. It is all-inclusive.

It must have been quite evident to even the casual concert-goer that German music has passed its zenith. It has had its day and it is not likely that post-bellum music will be Germanic. In an article in a recent number of "The Musical Quarterly," Edgar Istel reviews German opera since Wagner with a consistent tone of depreciation. The subject, of course, does not admit of enthusiasm. He calls Edmund Kretzschmer and Karl Goldmark "the compromise composers." There are probably

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not many Americans who have heard of the former or his "most successful opera," *Die Folkunger*. Goldmark is better known to us, but we do not exaggerate the importance of *Die Königin von Saba*, the *Sakuntala* overture, or *Die ländliche Hochzeit* symphony. Nor do we foreigners to the *Vaterland* know much about Victor Nessler's *Der Trompeter von Säckingen*, although we hear one air from it frequently at Sunday night concerts in the opera house. August Bungert tried to outdo Wagner with a six-day opera cycle, *Homerische Welt*, produced in 1898-1903 and already forgotten. Max Schillings, whose name has occasionally figured on symphony orchestra programmes in America, is thus dismissed by Istel: "Schillings' last work, *Der Moloch* (1906), proves his total inability as a dramatic composer." Hans Pfitzner is another name on which we need not linger. Engelbert Humperdinck, of course, wrote the one German opera which has had a world-wide and continuous success since *Parsifal*—*Hänsel und Gretel*. But the music he has composed since then has not awakened much enthusiasm. *Hänsel und Gretel* is, after all, folk-music with Wagnerian orchestration. It assuredly is not from Humperdinck that we can look for post-

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bellum music. We have heard Kienzl's very mediocre *Der Kuhreigen* and we have been promised a hearing of *Evangelimann*. The name of Siegfried Wagner signifies nothing. Ludwig Thuille wrote some very interesting music in the last act of *Lobetanz*, but that opera could not hold the stage at the Metropolitan Opera House. W. von Waltershausen's *Oberst Chabert* has been given in London, not, however, with conspicuous success. D'Albert has written many German operas in spite of his Scotch birth. Of these the best is *Tiefeland*, negligible in regarding the future. Leo Blech's unimportant *Versiegelt* gave pleasure in Berlin for a time. Wolf-Ferrari, one of the most gifted of the German composers, is half Italian. His work, of course, is not notable for originality of treatment. *Suzannen's Geheimniss* is very like an old Italian or Mozart opera. So is *Le Donne Curiose*. His cantata, *Vita Nuova*, is archaic in tone, a musical Cimabue or Giotto. *I Gioielli della Madonna* is an attempt at Italian *verismo*. Richard Strauss! the most considerable German musical figure of his time. His operas will still be given after the war and his tone-poems will be heard, but he has done his part in furthering the progress of art music.

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He has nothing more to say. In *The Legend of Joseph*, the ballet which the Russians gave in Paris last summer, it was to be observed that the Strauss idiom exploited therein had fully expressed itself in the earlier works of this composer. *Salome* and *Elektra* represent Strauss's best dramatic work, and *Don Juan* and *Till Eulenspiegel* are, perhaps, his best tone-poems. Richard Strauss, however, is assuredly not post-bellum. His music is a part of the riches of the past. One can easily pass rapidly by the names of Bruckner, Weingartner, and Gustav Mahler. Max Reger, I think, is not a great composer. But there are two Austrian names on which we must linger.

One of them is Erich Korngold, the boy composer, who is now eighteen years old. His earlier work, such as the ballet, *Der Schneemann*, sounds like Puccini with false notes. It is pretty music. Later, Korngold developed a fancy for writing Strauss and Reger with false notes. And he is still in process of development. What he may do cannot be entirely foreseen.

Arnold Schoenberg is another matter. He is still using as propaganda music which he wrote many years ago. No public has yet caught up

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with his present output. That is an excellent sign that his music is of the future. The string sextet, *Verklärte Nacht*, which the Kneisel Quartet played more than once in the season just past, dates from 1899. The string quartets were written in 1905 and 1908. The five orchestral pieces, the six piano pieces, and *Pierrot Lunaire*, other music of his on which what fame he possesses outside of Austria rests, are all over two years old. Now the Boston Symphony Orchestra has only recently deemed it fitting to play the five orchestral pieces, and I believe the piano pieces received their first public performance in New York at one of the concerts given by Leo Ornstein, although several pianists, notably Charles Henry Cooper and Mrs. Arensberg, had played them in private.

In 1911 Schoenberg issued his quite extraordinary "Handbuch der Harmonielehre," which is one of the best evidences that, even though the composer dies in the war, others will follow to carry on the torch from the point where he dropped it. Yes, Schoenberg, no less than Henri Matisse, is a torch-bearer in the art race. He is a stone in the architecture of music—and not an accidental decoration.

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May I quote a few passages from the "Handbuch"?

"The artist does not do what others find beautiful, but what he finds himself bound to do."

"If anyone feels dissatisfied with his time, let it not be because that time is no longer the good old time, but because it is not yet the new and better time, the future."

"Though I refrain from overprizing originality, I cannot help valuing novelty at its full worth. Novelty is the improvement toward which we are drawn as irresistibly, as unwittingly, as towards the future. It may prove to be a splendid betterment, or to be death—but also the certainty of a higher life after death. Yes, the future brings with it the novel and the unknown; and therefore, not without excuse, we often hold what is novel to be identical with what is good and beautiful."

With the single exception just noted it is not from the German countries that the musical invention of the past two decades has come. It is from France. Whether Debussy or Erik Satie or Fannelli first developed the use of the whole-tone scale is unimportant; they have all been writing in Paris.

Erik Satie is one of the precursors of a move-

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ment—not important in himself, but of immense importance as an indication. He is not a genius, and therefore his work has received little attention and has had no great influence. But it must be remembered that he was born in 1860 and that his *Gymnopédies* and *Gnossiennes*, composed respectively in 1888 and 1890, make a free use of the whole-tone scale and other harmonic innovations ordinarily attributed to Debussy. A *Sarabande*, written in 1887, should be tried on your piano. It will certainly startle you. Satie has recently achieved a little notoriety, thanks to Debussy and Ravel, who have dragged his music into the light. The more dramatic resurrection of Fanelli by Gabriel Pierné has been related too often to need retelling here.

Debussy, beyond question, is one of the high-water marks in the history of music. *L'Après-midi d'un Faune* is certainly post-Wagnerian in a sense that *Salome* is not. Maurice Ravel, Paul Dukas, Roger-Ducasse, Florent Schmitt, Chausson, Chabrier, and Charpentier are all revolutionists in a greater or less degree, and all of them are direct descendants of the great French composers who came before them. But what has been accomplished

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in France in the last few years? Dukas has written nothing important since *Ariane et Barbe-Bleue*. Debussy's recent works are not epoch-making: a makeshift ballet, *Jeux*, a few piano pieces; what else? Ravel's ballet, *Daphnis et Chloë*, is lovely music. Some people profess to find pleasure in listening to Schmitt's *Salome*. It is unbearable to me, danced or undanced. Vincent d'Indy—has he written a vibrant note since *Istar*? Charpentier's *Julien*—a rehash of *Louise*. It sounds some fifty years older, except the carnival scene. There is live futurist music in that last act. When Charpentier painted street noises on his tonal canvas, were they of night or morning, he knew his business. But certainly not a post-bellum composer, this. Charpentier will never compose another stirring phrase; that is written in the stars. Since *Pelléas et Mélisande* and *Ariane et Barbe-Bleue*, is there one French opera which can be called great? There are two very good ones, Raoul Laparra's *La Habanera* and Maurice Ravel's *l'Heure Espagnole*, and very many bad ones, such as Massenet's *Don Quichotte*, the unbelievable *Quo Vadis?* of Jean Nouguès, and the imitative and meaningless *Monna Vanna* of Février. I do not think it is from

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France that we may expect the post-bellum music.

Italy, long the land of opera, has held her place in the singing theatres. Verdi and Puccini still dominate the opera houses. But Puccini's work is accomplished. His popularity is waning, as the comparative failure of *The Girl of the Golden West* will testify. You will find the germ of all that is best in Puccini in *Manon Lescaut*, an early work. After that there is repetition and misdirection of energy, gradually diffused talent. It does not seem necessary to speak of Mascagni and Leoncavallo. They have both tried for so long a time to repeat their two successes and tried in vain. Cilea, Franchetti, Catalani, and Giordano—these names are almost forgotten already. Is Sgam-bati dead? Does anyone know whether he is or not? Zandonai—ah, there's a name to linger on! Watch out for Zandonai in the vanguard of the post-bellum composers. Save him from the war-maw. His *Conchita* disclosed a great talent; that opera shimmered with the hot atmosphere of Spain, a bestial, lazy Spain. This work I place with Debussy's *Iberia* as one of the great tonal pictures of Spain. I have not heard Zandonai's opera, *Fran-*

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cesca da Rimini, which was produced at Covent Garden Opera House last summer, but I have been told that its beauties are many. I hope we may hear it in New York. Pratella is one of Marinetti's group of futurists, one of the noise-makers. I am not so sure of Pratella as I am sure that many of his theories will be more successfully exploited by some one else.

Spain has been heard from recently—Spain, which has lacked a composer of “art music.” Albeniz and others have been writing piano music and now we are promised a one-act opera by Granados. Perhaps in time Spain may lift her head high and tinkle her castanets to some purpose, on programmes devoted to her own composers. But now it is Bizet, Chabrier, Debussy, Laparra, and Zandonai who have perverted these castanets and tambourines to their own uses.

I am no admirer of modern English music. I take less pleasure in hearing a piece by Sir Edward Elgar than I do in a mediocre performance of *Le Prophète*—and I assure you that Meyerbeer is not my favorite composer. A meaner skill than Sir Edward's, perhaps, lies in Irving Berlin's fingers, but a greater genius. I once spent a most fright-

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ful afternoon—at least nearly all of an afternoon—listening to Elgar's violin concerto, and I remember a dreadfully dull symphony, that sounded as if it were played on a throbbing organ at vespers in a dark church on a hot Sunday afternoon. The *Cockaigne* overture is more to my taste, although I think it no great achievement. Has there been a real composer in Britannia since Sir Arthur Sullivan, whose works one rehears with a pleasure akin to ecstasy? I do not think so. Cyril Scott is interesting. Holbrooke, Delius, Grainger, Wallace, and Bantock write much complex music for the orchestra, to say nothing of piano pieces, songs, and operas. (Holbrooke supplements his labors in this direction with the writing of articles for "The English Review" and other periodicals, in which he complains bitterly that the English composer is without honor in his own country.) I find Scott's piano pieces better. But since *Il Barbiere di Siviglia* and *Le Nozze di Figaro* there have been but few comic scores comparable to *Patience*. You will hear the Sullivan operas many times after the war, but one cannot think of founding a school upon them.

I shall not hesitate on the music of America, be-

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cause in a country that has no ante-bellum music—one cannot speak with too great enthusiasm of Ethelbert Nevin and Edward MacDowell—there is no immediate promise of important development. However, in a digression, I should like to make a few remarks on the subject of the oft-repeated charge, re-echoed by Holbrooke in relation to British musicians, that American composers are neglected and have no chance for a hearing in their own country. Has ever a piano piece been played more often or sold more copies than MacDowell's *To a Wild Rose*, unless it be Nevin's *Narcissus*? Probably *The Rosary* has been sung more times in more quarters of the globe than *Rule Britannia*. Other American songs which have achieved an international success and a huge sale are *At Parting*, *A Maid Sings Light*, *From the Land of the Sky-blue Water*, and *The Year's at the Spring*. Orchestral works by Paine, Hadley, Converse, and others, are heard almost as soon as they are composed, and many of them are heard more than once, played by more than one orchestra. Of late years it has been the custom to produce an American work each season at the Metropolitan Opera House, a custom fortunately abandoned during the

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season just past. No, it cannot be said that the American composer has been neglected.

Finland has presented us with Sibelius, whose latest works indicate that Helsingfors may have something to say about the trend of tone after the war, and from Poland Karol Szymanowski has sent forth some strange and appealing songs.

But it is to Russia, after all, I think, that we must turn for the inspiration, and a great deal of the execution, of our post-bellum music. Fortunately for us, we have not yet delved very deeply into the past of Russian music, in spite of reports to the contrary. Mr. Gatti-Casazza once assured me that *Boris Godunow* was the only Russian opera which stood any chance of success in America. He has doubtless revised his feeling on the subject, since he has announced *Prince Igor* for production this season, an opera which should be greeted with very warm enthusiasm, if the producers give any decent amount of attention to the very important ballet.

It is interesting, in turning to Russian literature, to discover that Turgenev in the middle of the nineteenth century was writing a masterpiece like "A Sportsman's Sketches," a work full of reserve

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and primitive force, and a strange charm. And Turgenev was born and bred a gentleman in the sense that Thackeray was born and bred a gentleman. In English literature we have travelled completely around the circle, through the artificial, the effete, and the sentimental, to the natural, the forceful, the primitive. Art like that of D. H. Lawrence, George Moore, and Theodore Dreiser is very much abroad in the lands. Russia began her circle only in the last century with her splendidly barbaric school of writers who touch the soil at every point, the soil and the soul: Turgenev, Gogol, Pushkin, Dostoievsky, Andreyev, Tolstoy, Tchekhov, Gorky, and Artzybachev, a noble group of names. We find in Russia a situation very akin to that of Ireland, a people commercially underdeveloped, in a large measure born to suffering, keenly alive to artistic impulse.

In Ireland this impulse has expressed itself almost entirely through the written word, but in Russia it has found an outlet in a thousand channels. (The arts have grouped themselves together in the glowing splendor of the Russian Ballet productions.) Music, like literature, sprang into being in Russia, fed on the rich folk-songs of the

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Slavic races, during the nineteenth century; and again like Russian literature, its first baby notes were wild, appealing, barbaric, forceful, and sincere—the music of the steppes and the people, rather than the music of the drawing-room and the nobility. Let us remember that about the time Richard Wagner was writing *Tristan und Isolde*, Moussorgsky was putting on paper, with infinite pain, the notes of the scores of the poignant *Boris Godunow* and the intense *La Khovanchina*. Since then the Russian music world has been occupied by men who have given their lives to the foundation of a national school. Their work has been largely overshadowed in America by the facile genius of Tschaiakowsky, who wrote the most popular symphony of the nineteenth century, but who is less Russian and less important than many of his confrères.

If for a time after the war one must turn to the past for operatic novelties, one can do no better than to go to Russia. It is my firm conviction that several of the Russian operas would have a real success here. *La Khovanchina* to many musicians is more beautiful than *Boris*. It is indeed a serious work of genius. The chorus with which the first

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act closes has power enough to entice me to the theatre at any time. I do not know of a death-scene in all the field of opera as strong in its effect as that of the Prince Ivan Khovansky. He is stabbed and he falls dead. He does not sing again, he does not move; there are no throbs of the violins, no drum beats. There is a pause. The orchestra is silent. The people on the stage are still. It is tremendous!

Rimsky-Korsakow's music is pretty well known in America. His *Scheherazade* and *Antar* suites are played very often; but his operas remain unsung here. Why? He wrote some sixteen of them before he died. Even so early a work as *A Night in May* contains many lovely pages. It is a folk-song opera built along the old lines of set numbers. It reminds one of *The Bartered Bride*. First produced in 1880, it does not show its age. *The Snow Maiden* contains the *Song of the Shepherd Lehl* and one or two other airs familiar in the concert repertoire. *Sadko*, if given in the Russian manner, would fill any opera house for two performances a week for the season; and *Ivan the Terrible* is a masterpiece of its kind. But the greatest of them all is the last lyric drama of the composer, *The*

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Golden Cock, in which this great tone colorist bent his ear further towards the future than he had ever done before.

The death of Alexander Scriabine recently in Petrograd created little comment, although the papers had been filled a few weeks before with descriptions of the very bad performance of his *Prometheus* by the Russian Symphony Orchestra. Scriabine, another Gordon Craig, was too great a theorist, too concerned with the perfect in his art, ever to arrive at anything approximating the actual. As an influence, he can already be felt. His synchronism of music, light, and perfumes was never realized in his own music, although the Russian Ballet has completely realized it. (How cleverly that organization—or is it a movement?—has seized everybody's good ideas, from Wagner's to Adolphe Appia's!) As for Scriabine's strange scales and disharmonies, Igor Strawinsky has made the best use of them—Igor Strawinsky, perhaps the greatest of the musicians of the immediate future. I hope Americans may hear his wonderfully beautiful opera, *The Nightingale*; and if all the music of the future is like that, I stand with bowed and reverent head before the music of the future

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(with the mental reservation, however, that I may spurn it when it is no longer music of the future). His three ballets are also works of genius.

It is indeed to Strawinsky, whose strange harmonies evoked new fairy worlds in *The Nightingale* and whose barbaric rhythms stirred the angry pulses of a Paris audience threatened with the shame of an emotion in the theatre, to whom we may turn, perhaps, for still new thrills after the war. Strawinsky has so far showed his growth in every new work he has vouchsafed the public. From Schoenberg, and Korngold in a lesser degree, we may hope for messages in tone, disharmonic by nature, and with a complexity of rhythm so complex that it becomes simple. (In this connection I should like to say that there are scarcely two consecutive bars in Strawinsky's ballet, *The Sacrifice to the Spring*, written in the same time-signature, and yet I know of no music—I do not even except *Alexander's Ragtime Band*—more dance-compelling.) We may pray to Karol Szymanowski for futurist wails from ruined Poland; a rearranged, disharmonic version of the national airs of the warring countries may spring from France or Italy; but for the new composers, the new

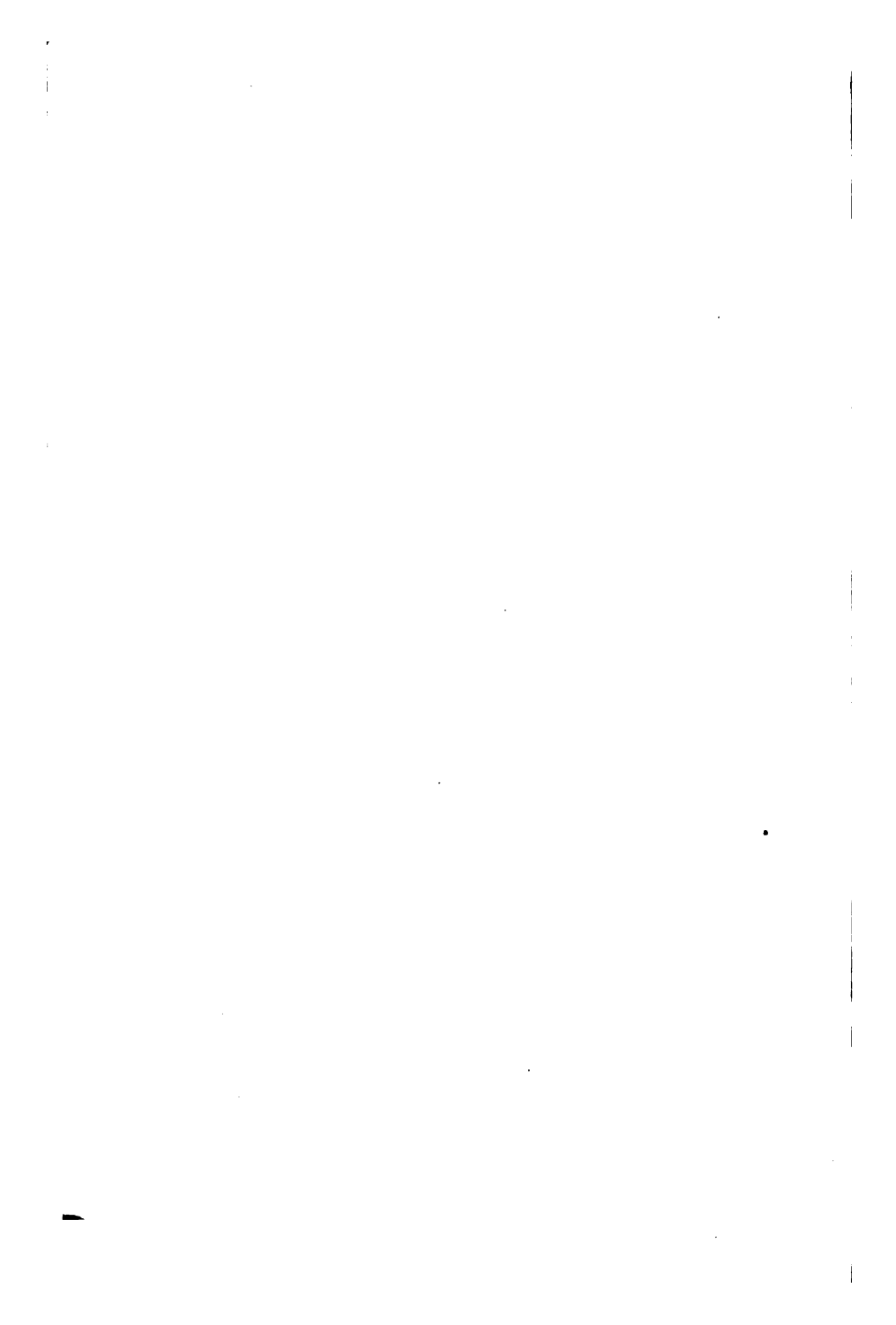
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names, the strong, new blood of the immediate future in music, we must turn to Russia. The new music will not come from England, certainly not from America, not from France, nor from Germany, but from the land of the steppes—a gradual return to that orientalism in style which may be one of the gifts of culture, which an invasion from the Far East may impose on us some time in the next century.

June, 1916.



Music for Museums?



Music for Museums?

I SAW people actually enjoying themselves at a recent piano recital. During the performance of some of the numbers they laughed; at other times they nudged one another and made comments. The conclusion of each piece was punctuated by a certain amount of vociferous applause, and an almost equal amount of disapprobation. One group of pieces on the programme, Claude Debussy's *Children's Corner*, was familiar; as a result, it aroused less interest than some of the other music played. Albeniz, one of the new men who is making the list of Spanish compositions extend beyond the folk-song, was represented by his *El Albaicin*; Maurice Ravel by *Gaspard de la Nuit*, a very successful attempt to paint atmosphere and character in the very limited tonal medium of the pianoforte; Scriabine by four preludes and a sonata; and Leo Ornstein, the pianist, by *Seven Sketches* and *Two Shadow Pieces*. Mr. Ornstein's compositions have no truck with majors and minors, thirds and fifths, pentatonic and diatonic scales. His descending fingers strike masses of keys; some auditors seemed to think there is no

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plan in these assaults on the board. Personally, I am willing to wager that the last piano sonatas of the deaf Beethoven meant just as little to their first hearers. We have become accustomed to the sweet and unsubtle way of the tonic and dominant. Arnold Schoenberg and Igor Stravinsky are yet discordant to our melody-soaked and harmony-demanding ears.

Yet, if concert programmes are consulted, one will find in them very little music earlier than the eighteenth century. The symphony orchestra is really a discovery of the nineteenth century. When our symphony orchestras play Bach, Haydn, or Mozart, the reënforcements, the rearrangements, would astonish those old composers as much as the electric signs on Broadway, could they be brought back to hear them. Either one-half the band—nay, two-thirds—must sit still during the playing of these numbers, if the original body of tone is to be preserved, or else some readjustment is necessary. For instance, it is quite customary to allow the full body of strings to play a Mozart symphony, although the wood-winds and brasses are not appreciably greater in number in the modern orchestra than they were in Mozart's time.

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Lack of proportion and over-emphasis are the natural results.

It is only the composers who have invented the modern orchestra, Berlioz, Liszt, Wagner, Strauss, Reger, Strawinsky and Scriabine—to mention a few names—who get justice done to their compositions. In fact, as it stands, the modern orchestra exists for the perfect playing of modern music. It is a dizzy, vertiginous force; floods of sound are let loose on the hearer to drown his sensibilities and to make him “feel.” Now, there was something very precise and exact and prim about the peruked band of the day of Haydn, which would have played the *Symphonie Pathétique* as if it were the *Marche Funèbre d'une Marionnette*. Music in the good old days did not cause women to swoon and men to swear. There were no Wagnerites then. (Are there any now?) The composer of *Armide* would not have inspired an Aubrey Beardsley drawing. So when the modern orchestra plays Mozart it makes just a little too much of it. Mozart and Strauss! It is the difference between Cimabue and Michael Angelo.

The conflict between periodic conventions and contemporary methods and tastes is always great

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and will always serve as an excuse for discussion. There seems to be no adequate reason why we should give up Shakespeare because we do not perform his plays in the Elizabethan manner. After all, a tune is a tune, and *Voi che sapete* would probably sound very well played on mandolins if Mme. Sembrich did not happen to be handy to sing it. The Anglican church has found it well adapted for hymnal purposes, as anyone knows who has heard *Adeste Fideles*. So, perhaps, Bach rearranged by Gustav Mahler, or Josef Stransky, or anybody else who happens to have the time, is to be listened to, just as we are all forced to lend our ears several times a year, whether it be in a concert hall or a restaurant, or on an ocean liner, to Gounod's idea of a Bach prelude.

There is a great deal of the old music which gives a pleasant impression to the ear if it be not heard too frequently. Mozart, Bach, and Gluck, however, stand the test of frequent repetition better than Beethoven. It would also be a mistake, perhaps, not to give the students of music an opportunity to hear past examples of the art, to establish in their minds a knowledge of the successive steps which have been taken in building up

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this arbitrary thing which we call "art music," although it is neither the music of the Chinese, who, after all, may be considered an artistic race, the African negroes, the Indians, nor the Japanese. It would not be advisable, perhaps, to have any admirer of present-day art music believe that it was all that could be said or done in music; an historical survey is necessary. For some of us there is always the question of relative importance. It may be a fact that nobody in the future will be able to extract more beautiful arbitrary art-music out of the air than has been composed by Mozart and Wagner. We are sure that Berlioz, Liszt, Meyerbeer, and Mendelssohn can be improved on because they have been. Perhaps Beethoven's Fifth Symphony is really better music than any which has been composed before or since. (Personally, I do not for a moment think so.) For the purpose of argument, however, it is necessary to presuppose that some people set up standards of this sort. There are those, doubtless, who are really sincere in their devotion to the composers whose names begin with a B; but there is a larger group whose ears find it easier to listen not merely to music based upon a certain scale, but to *certain*

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music based on this scale. As a result, one might say that the very limited attendance on which our symphony orchestras may count is largely made up of middle-aged people who are never contemptuous of familiarity.

The principle, of course, is all wrong. Still, when every person in a vast population is expected to enjoy arbitrary art-music, one cannot expect perception or taste. In our civilization everybody is supposed to "love" music. Poor though we may be, we send our daughters to the music-masters. From cottage to cottage the echoes of the piano-forte resound and, especially in the beginning, each pupil is given a taste of what is known in the provinces as "classical" music. Czerny is hauled out to teach the fingers how to be agile. There must be a taste of Bach's *Wohltemperirtes Clavier*, a Chopin waltz or two. . . . Heller is a favorite with small-town teachers, and then the student may burst gaily into the intricacies of the latest air by Irving Berlin. Now, why is it that the newest of the arts—at least the newest from the arbitrary point of view from which we consider music as an art—is taught to almost all the children of all the lands? They are actually

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beaten with sticks to drive them to the keyboard. To be sure, children are also taught to read, for more cogent reasons. It would do no harm to anyone to be taught to read music; but to be taught to play it is like being taught to act. What if we should all be taught to paint?—Well, after all, why not?

The results are not heartening. The fact is that over fifty per cent. of the audiences who attend symphony concerts cannot carry a tune. Naturally they are not averse to hearing Beethoven's Fifth Symphony played over and over and over again, but I should like to ask these same people how many times during the course of a season they would listen to a masterpiece in words—*Hamlet*, for instance. How much less often would they care to hear a play by Bernard Shaw?—and yet there are some overtures and symphonies which every orchestra plays every season to its patrons. Some of this music one also hears in restaurants and in the opera house. It is monstrous!

I really do not think that a modern symphony orchestra ought to be allowed to play more than one Beethoven symphony a season. This fossili-

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zation would be deadening to any art. A set concert programme is almost an occasion for despair under the brightest conditions, but with no new life in its make-up, it had better remain an unperformed programme. When an orchestra is the medium through which a new musician pours out his inspiration to the world, there is meaning in the organization. When it ambles idly through Brahms and Bach it occupies the same place in the world's affairs that the museum does. Why should all our orchestras, except on rare occasions, on being museums?

We have seen that only an inert audience may be counted upon ~~from the ranks~~ of the music students of the country. More interest might be expected from auditors prepared to be unprepared. To be sure, every conductor is keen to put a few "novelties" on his programmes every year. This season, for instance, a symphony by Sibelius, which has been played in Europe for some time and has been performed here before, has been hauled out again to make the critics foam at the mouth. Igor Strawinsky's early work, *Fireworks*, composed and published in 1908, has been vouchsafed us. Since then Strawinsky, who, to my

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mind, is the most brilliant of the new composers, has written three ballets, *The Firebird*, *Petrouchka*, and *The Sacrifice to the Spring*, and an opera, *The Nightingale*. Not a note, so far as I am aware, of these most interesting scores has been heard in New York, although Paris and London are thoroughly familiar with them. Schoenberg is as yet barely a ghoulish name in this country, to be whispered shudderingly until some daring soul makes the Austrian composer a conventional thing of the past. The Kneisels have at last taken him up, if that means anything, and, of course, Ornstein has played him. The Flonzaleys have played a quartet and the Boston Symphony Orchestra has performed the five orchestral pieces. Chicago, too, has heard these. This is as far as we have gone with Schoenberg. There is really no use of referring to so bad a performance as the Russian Symphony Orchestra gave of Scriabine's *Prometheus*. We hear too much Strauss now. There was a time when we did not hear enough. The academic Reger was feared like the plague for whole years. Now that his message means as little as possible, he jumps from programme to programme.

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Symphony concerts, then, as they exist in America—and to a lesser degree elsewhere—are museums, where one may inspect bits of old musical armor, tunes in *Sèvres*, tinkling lace shawls from Brussels, or harmonious bowls of the Ming period. The audiences are shameless so-called music-lovers who dawdle through endless repetitions of the *Euryanthe* overture, and who whisper exquisite trifles to one another about the delights of an audition of a Mozart symphony. Really there is nothing so smug, so snobbish, to be found in the world as the audience of a symphony society, unless it be a string-quartet audience. Beside these groups you find opera-goers are simple human beings. Both the organization and its supporters, then, we discover, are simply corrupted by cobwebs. They are things of the past that persist in going on. A live orchestra, built on living principles, which played new music if it played at all, would serve not only to develop new composers, but also new ideas. One can talk intelligently and even quarrel with one's neighbor about a new Strawinsky work. At best, if one is a critic, one can write a column about how Gustav Mahler doubled the brasses in a Beethoven symphony and

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thus became the most arrant of knaves, or, if one is not a critic, one may say, "I like Mr. Stransky so much when he conducts Liszt!" To be sure, the snobs and the smug would be bewildered by the novelties. Perhaps they wouldn't even go to the concerts, although that seems unbelievable. But there would be new audiences. At a recent concert of the Boston Symphony Orchestra, in New York, Dr. Muck dared to place three unfamiliar works on the programme. (God knows this was an unusual proceeding.) Not one of these was formidable; not one of them new, except to those comfortable ladies and gentlemen who have sat through concerts devoted to Beethoven and Bach so long that they should know the tunes by heart. Yet the protests were many and loud. I think Dr. Muck really stirred up an interest in music by this procedure.

But if our symphony societies are dead, what of our string quartets? Chamber music! Its title explains it. It is music intended to be played at home . . . *music intended to be played*, not to be listened to, except, perhaps, by some dotting members of the performers' families. Suppose you play the violin and you can find another violin-

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ist, and a 'cellist, and a violist, you invite them all to come to your house some night and you take down Schubert's quartets, or Tschaikowsky's, and entertain yourselves. Father, reading his paper, listens listlessly. . . . Sister Mary doesn't object to giving her ear occasionally, but there is no concerted attention devoted to you. Nor should there be. People do not, as a rule, attempt to play piano duets in public. Why they should play string quartets I do not know. Yet you will find the cult of the string quartet is almost a mystic body. There is a great deal said about this being the "highest and noblest" form of music (arbitrary art-music), and a great many people are impressed with the idea that to know the string quartets of the masters in itself constitutes a liberal education. To know how to play them does, in fact, make for a certain education, but to listen to them—well, that is a different matter. The string quartet plays in the very dustiest part of the museum in which "modern" concerts are given. Its audiences are fanatics who have gone mad over an old religion, and while they will listen on occasion to trios, sextets, and piano quintets, their idea of the limitations of the possible combina-

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tions of instruments is circumscribed. . . .
To my mind, there seems to be no good reason why we should not have a duet between child's voice and flute; two guitars and two mandolins make very pretty music.

I really do not know whether it is the concert-going public which makes snobs of the critics, or the critics who make snobs of the public. It is certain that the music critics are loftier in their self-created mountain strongholds than almost any body of people since the worthy mastersingers. They are the cataloguers of the museum, and as each set of performers takes out an old doll and makes its arms and legs wobble, and teases it to cry "Mama," they express their delight or their displeasure over the results. If a new doll, by any chance, is brought in, it is quickly sent to the basement by these judges, unless it imitates not only in appearance, but in gesture as well, some old doll. Montemezzi is a doll who did not win the disapproval of the critics because they had been hearing *L'Amore dei tre Re* or something like it all their lives. . . . Zandonai, on the other hand. . . . New dolls are not wanted in a museum which contains the works of Beethoven, Bach, and

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Brahms. Pratella's name does not even begin with a B. But neither does Strauss's, nor Debussy's. After all, however, if one writes criticisms one must have a standard, I hear you objecting. Most critics do, mercifully enough for their readers, for if one's standard is not to accept any innovations after a diminished seventh, it at least gives his readers an opportunity to be aware of what he means when he says that a work is discordant. When a seasoned examiner of musical criticism meets this word he understands that the critic means that the music under discussion is quite different from that of Weber and Puccini. There may be, on the other hand, very good reasons to suppose that to an unprejudiced ear, one not fed up on art-music, the new music may not be any more discordant than the hum of a factory, the roar of a city, or any of the familiar rhythmical sounds to which our ears are so accustomed that we accept them. The Hottentot and the Chinaman find real pleasure in what we call discords, and, as a result, they have achieved in their music complexities of rhythm which would be beyond the grasp of the ordinary composer of our art-music.

. . . It is alone the critic's point of view,

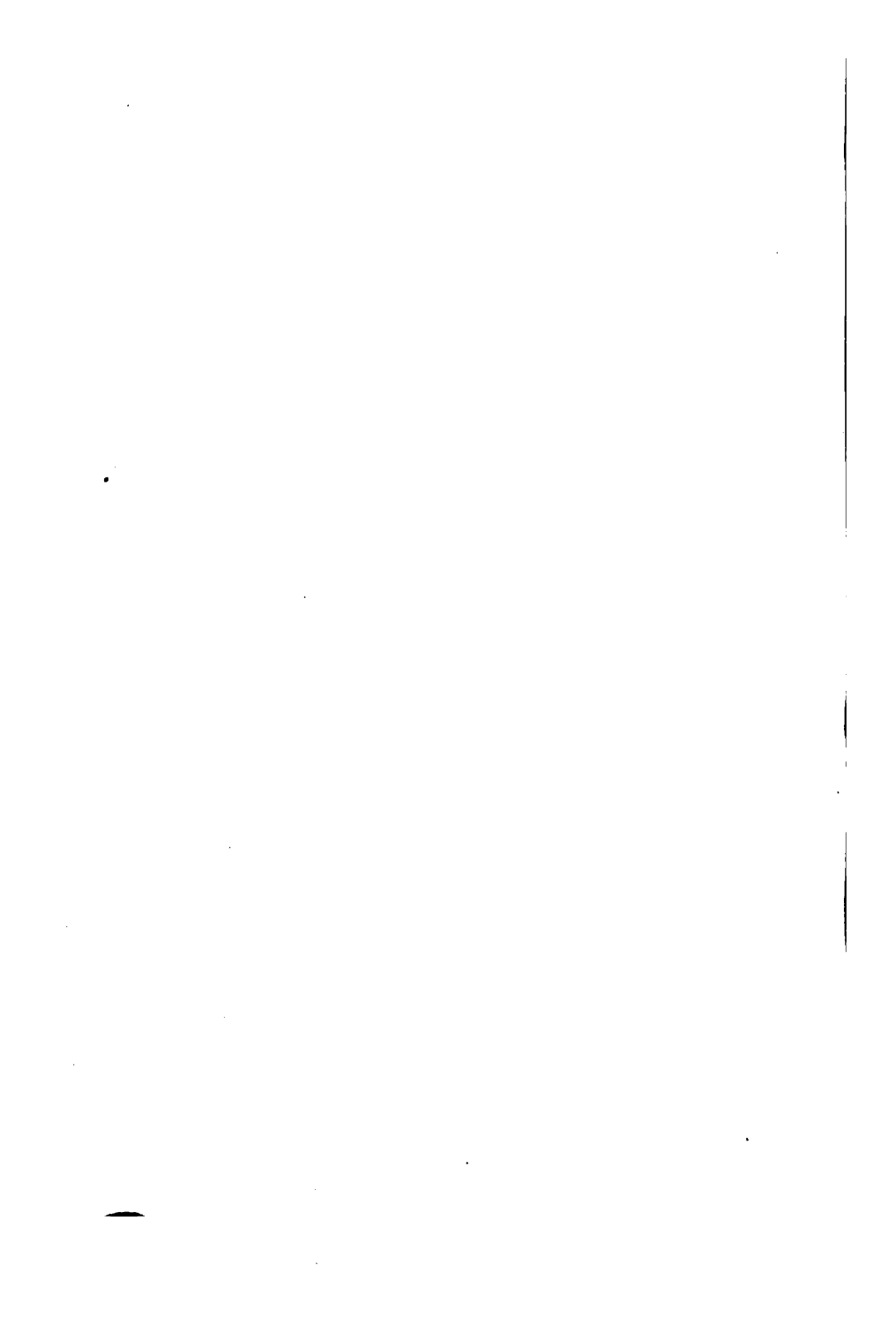
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well-defined, which makes him comprehensible when he disdains to be more scientific in his criticism.

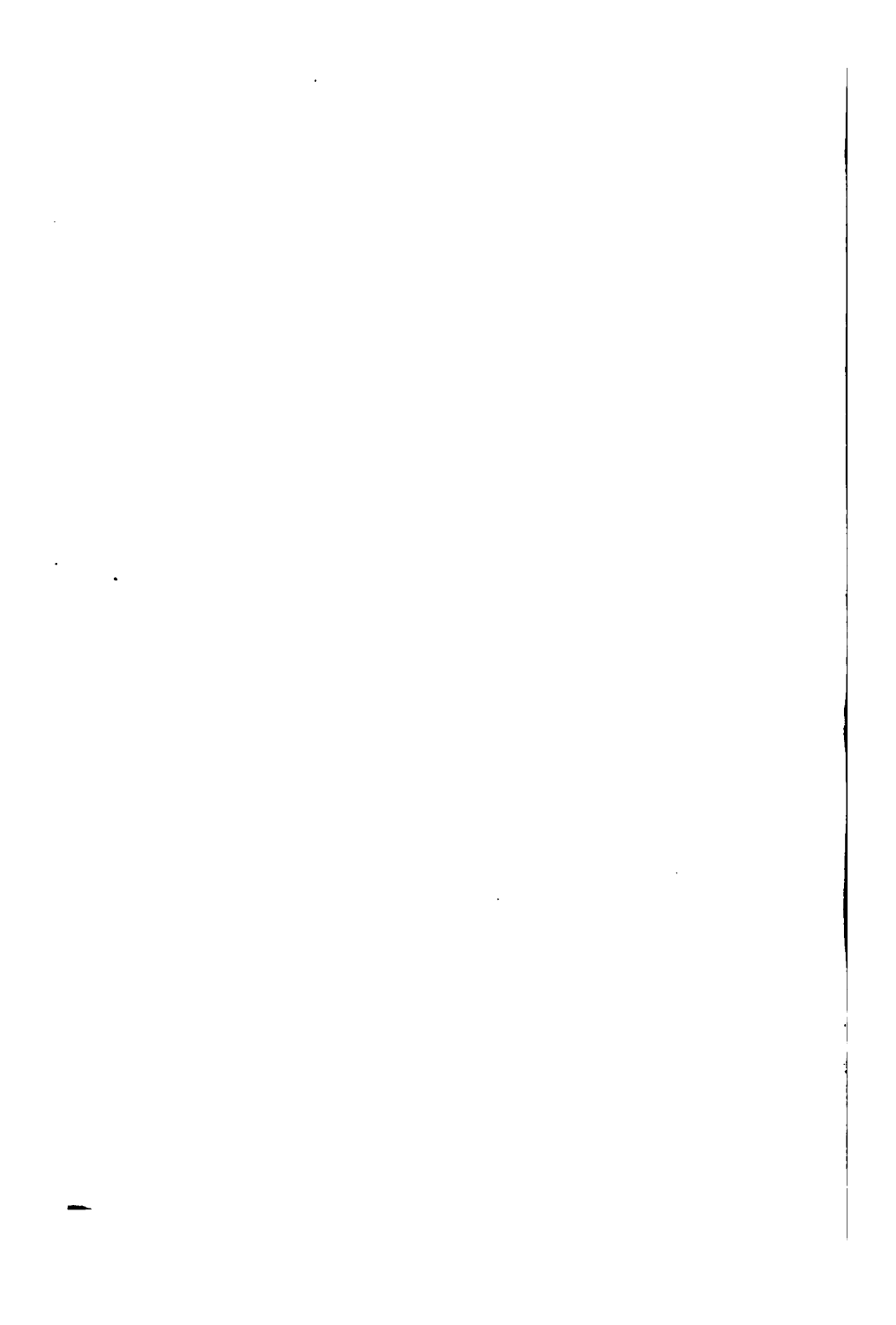
There would seem to be a better way, unless the critic can describe his emotions as poignantly as Pater painted his impressions of the *Monna Lisa*. Why not a scientific description? For years columns and pages have been pouring over to us about the "discordant" Schoenberg, but nothing which actually gives you an idea of Schoenberg has yet appeared, at least not under my eyes. (I might except a few paragraphs in Huneker's article.) One could give an idea of what the music really was like, at least to a musician. Or one could make a confession, such as I heard Alfred Hertz make after the first performance in London of Strawinsky's very beautiful opera, *The Nightingale*, in which instruments are combined with such strange effect that it is almost as if the composer had discovered a new scale of tones: "I am considered a good musician. When I am conducting an orchestra I can detect a false note in the furthest bassoon, or the nearest flute, but in the second act of *The Nightingale* I could not name a single note."

[43]

January, 1915.



The Secret of the Russian Ballet



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IRONY certainly directed the workings of fate when it was decreed, in this age of individualism, that the group-spirit should dominate the movements of the theatre, an institution in which, not so many years ago, the individual reigned, his head crowned with bays. Democracy has two effects: it strengthens the individual and it gives him the power to join with other individuals in fostering the growth of his ideals. Thus Max Reinhardt, distinctly individual though he may be, has made his impression through his artists, his actors, and his musicians. So has Stanislavsky of Moscow, who in one instance solicited the services of Gordon Craig. The Irish Theatre movement, which developed so great a genius as Synge and many lesser, but still important, writers, such as T. C. Murray and St. John Ervine, was essentially conceived in the group-spirit. But more than any of these, the most brilliant movement in the theatre of our time, the Russian Ballet (I am referring specifically to the organization under the direction of Serge de Diaghilew) has relied to an extraordinary degree on the group for

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its effect—one which, on modern art, music, dancing, stage decorations, and women's fashions, can scarcely be overestimated. I have heard it said, not altogether as a jest, that the Russian Ballet has had an influence on European politics.

There are still many people, however, who have never seen the performances of the Russian Ballet, who think of it only as an aggregation of virtuosi, much after the manner of one of Mr. Grau's all-star casts in *Les Huguenots*. It is true that the names of Nijinsky, Karsavina, Fokine, Miassine, Bolm, and Fokina have inevitably awakened the same sort of magic sympathy that the names of Nordica, Melba, Calvé and the de Reszkes once evoked. The misunderstanding has followed in natural sequence. Nevertheless—and this is said without any desire to depreciate the value of the Russian stars—it is fortunate that the ideal of the producers of these mimed dramas is aimed higher than at the exploitation of individual talent. Their ultimate goals are cohesiveness and general pictorial effect. And this fact makes it possible for the Ballet to give representative performances with or without the aid of any particular dancer. In the summer of 1914,

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for example, in the absence of the superlative Nijinsky, the Russians made very lovely productions of Rimsky-Korsakow's *The Golden Cock* and Richard Strauss's *The Legend of Joseph*.

For any comprehensive view of the achievements of the organization, it is essential to remember that Mr. de Diaghilew's Russian Ballet began in Paris as an art exhibition; that is the secret. For two seasons Bakst and other Russian painters hung their pictures in the French capital. These two picture-shows are now included in the official lists of the Russian Ballet seasons, and by no means accidentally, or for purposes of misrepresentation. For the Ballet has, in a large sense, continued to be a picture-exhibition, and in spite of the fact that some of the novelty has been worn off by multiplied imitations, the thing itself still retains a good deal of the original impulse. The Russian Ballet, on its decorative side, is entirely responsible for the riot of color which has spread over the Western world in clothes and house furnishings. Without the Russian Ballet as an inspiration there could have been no Paul Poiret, no Paul Iribe, no George Barbier, no Jean Cocteau, no George Lepape, no Marcel Lejeune. There surely would

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have been no "Gazette de Bon-Ton" and no department-shop sales of striped and spotted fabrics of every shade under the sun. George Bernard Shaw did not stretch the truth when he said that for the past five years the Russian Ballet has furnished the sole inspiration for fashions in women's dress. . . . One does not need to remember any further back than the summer of 1914, when *Papillons* and *The Legend of Joseph* were produced, to follow him. The crinolined ruffled skirts of the former ballet and the prim Veronese gowns of the latter (recall Lillah McCarthy's dresses in *The Doctor's Dilemma*) have been repeated in a thousand forms. And so we might go back, year by year, to the season when Bakst's *Sheherazade* launched the Oriental craze which is still making itself felt in hamlets on the Great Lakes.

These decorations, and the costumes which accompany them, designed by such artists—many of them well-known painters in Russia—as Roerich, Bakst, Fedorowsky, Soudeikine, Golovine, Doboujinsky, Alexander Benois, and Nathalie Gontcharowa, are the basis of the beauty of the Russian Ballet, and they are so perfect in their many mani-

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festations that no amount of imitation can entirely spoil them. When Roerich's scene for the Polovtsian camp in *Prince Igor*, a composition in dull greys and reds, with low, round-topped tents and rising columns of smoke, was disclosed in Paris, Jacques Blanche, the French painter, was moved to write an article in which he hailed the designer as the inventor of a new type of stage scenery, and even called upon the easel painters to learn a lesson in truth from this rugged Russian. Roerich subsequently designed the very beautiful green landscape of the first scene for Strawinsky's *The Sacrifice to the Spring*, and the grewsome setting, between somewhere and nowhere, of the second. To Fedorowsky are due the barbaric decorations and costumes for Moussorgsky's opera, *La Khovanchina*. The dresses of the Persian ballet in this opera, orange riots, speckled with patches of deep green and blue, have been plentifully imitated. Soudeikine devised the extravagant ostrich-plumed gauds worn by the six negroes who accompanied Florent Schmitt's *Salome* on her decadent way. And Nathalie Gontcharova, with exquisite fantasy, designed the scenes and costumes for *The Golden Cock*, a production in which the

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Russians showed that they were willing to go yet further in the realms of color-combination than they had before ventured, Bakst, of course, is as well known to us as Aubrey Beardsley or Longfellow. There have been books of his work on sale; the magazines and newspapers have reprinted many of his best designs; there has been an exhibition of his original drawings at the Berlin Photographic Galleries in New York. However, in spite of the reproductions and imitations, I think those who have not yet seen a Bakst production, such as *Sheherazade*, *Daphnis et Chloë*, or the extraordinary *Legend of Joseph*, on the stage may prepare for a thrill.

The scene exposed on the very large Drury Lane stage as the curtain rose on Richard Strauss's ballet was certainly very splendid in its majestic beauty. The stage directions give some conception of the picture:

“The scene, the stage furniture, and the costumes are throughout in the manner of Paolo Veronese, and thus follow, in style and fashion, those of the period of about 1530. The Egyptian characters wear Venetian costumes; Joseph and the dealers who bring him to Potiphar, Oriental dress

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of the sixteenth century. The scene represents a huge pillared hall in the Palladian style. The pillars and ceiling are of bright gold with a greenish sheen. The floor is inlaid with blocks of colored marble. The background is traversed by a raised loggia, also of gold, which is open to the air on the farther side, and gives a view over gardens with playing fountains, and distant wings of the palace; the openings on the further side are, however, curtained during the banquet by a vast carpet of Flemish work representing the Earthly Paradise—stretches of verdure, alive with exotic beasts of every kind. The loggia has no balustrade, but is open between the pillars from floor to ceiling, so that the personages traversing it are entirely visible from head to foot. On the right a flight of steps leads up to the loggia. Over the floor of the loggia an Oriental carpet is hung, reaching down to the hall.

“On the stage in front of the loggia are set two tables at right angles to each other; the one furthest from the spectator is rather long and runs parallel to the supporting wall of the loggia; the other is only short, and joins the first at right angles on the left. The table to the front is raised

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on three steps as a dais. On the tables are richly chiselled vessels of gold and silver, high ewers of cut crystal full to the brim with gleaming red and white wines, and dishes in which lie, heaped in profusion, pomegranates, peaches, and grapes of unusual size: golden platters and crystal glasses are before the guests. The guests—men and women by threes, in opulent Venetian costumes—sit at the farthest side of the table at the back, half concealed behind the vessels of gold, the crystal, and the piled fruit. At the table in front Potiphar and his wife, the latter in a robe of scarlet brocade, cut very low, over which hang long strings of pearls. At her feet on the lowest step of the dais, a young female slave. The tables are served by eight negro slaves in a semi-Oriental garb of pink and gold, and on their heads are nodding plumes of white and pink. Behind the dais, in the angle to the left, under the loggia, Potiphar's bodyguard—gigantic mulattos, with breastplates of black inlaid with gold, of Toledo workmanship, with black plumes and halberds of gold. They also carry whips with short golden handles."

The spaciousness of this picture, the sense of splendor it conveyed, cannot be communicated

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second-hand. A young Spanish painter, José-Maria Sert, designed the majestic loggia, and Bakst vivified the scene, truly Veronese, with its women in gorgeous brocades, flaring skirts, puffed sleeves, and stilted mules, the officers in waving plumes, two of the slaves holding lank greyhounds in check. One detail was essentially Bakst. In the old Venetian costumes a panel of lace, down the front, covered the opening made by the flaring brocades. This Bakst removed, exposing the legs of his women, in silken hose, tightly trousered above the knee. This undergarmenting, in its inception, is authentic, as anyone may see who visits the Museo Civico Correr in Venice.

I have hesitated this long over *The Legend of Joseph* because, in reproduction at least, it is one of the least familiar of the Bakst ballets, not because it is more interesting than *Sheherazade*, *Daphnis et Chloë*, or a half-dozen other of this artist's productions.

In considering the factors which go to make up the perfection of this organization it is necessary to lay considerable stress on the importance of the music. In each of the cities where the Ballet has appeared a large orchestra of picked musicians

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(in some instances an organized orchestra, such as Thomas Beecham's in London) has assisted at the performances. The music of the ballets, even when adapted for this use, as in *Cléopâtre*, is of a fine quality, and in the variety of the compositions employed (ordinarily three or four ballets make up a programme) and in the manner of their performance there is the greatest amount of interest for those who are more interested in hearing than in seeing. Particularly is this true as the Russian Ballet has been the means of bringing some of the most radical and anarchistic of modern composers to a hearing before the public. Since Tschaikowsky wrote three ballets, no musician in Russia has considered it less than an honor to write for dancing.

Certain of the works performed have been taken from the concert room, *l'Après-midi d'un Faune*, for example, with the approval, and even the applause, of Monsieur Debussy; and *Sheherazade*, in spite of the protests of Rimsky-Korsakow's heirs. Balakirew's *Thamar*, too, was programme music before it became a ballet. But several works have been written for performance by this organization. Among these I may mention Maurice Ravel's

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Daphnis et Chloë, the music of which exactly illustrates the action of the ballet but is not easily transferable to the concert room, although Ravel made an arrangement which the Colonne Orchestra has played in Paris and the Symphony Society of New York has performed in New York; Debussy's *Jeux*; Reynaldo Hahn's *Le Dieu Bleu*; Steinberg's *Midas*; Tcherepnine's *Narcisse*; Richard Strauss's *The Legend of Joseph*, which the composer himself conducted for several performances both in London and in Paris; and the three really extraordinary works of Igor Strawinsky, *The Firebird*, *Petrouchka*, and *The Sacrifice to the Spring*. I have elsewhere expressed my great admiration for the genius of this young man; it is certainly my opinion that more inspiration is made manifest in these three works than in any other recent music I have heard in the theatre or the concert room. Paul Dukas also wrote a ballet for the Russians, *La Péri*, but although it was announced, the production was finally made under other auspices.

Any concert-goer will immediately note the fact that a good deal of the music in the repertoire of the Russian Ballet is familiar to him.

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Balakirew began his symphonic poem, *Tamara* (the ballet is called *Thamar*), suggested by a poem by Lermontoff, in 1867; it was concluded in 1882. The composer wrote in 1869 that he had composed parts of it as he "danced along" the street. The Chicago Orchestra performed the work for the first time in America in 1896. The Russian Symphony Society introduced it to New York in 1908. When the Russians adopted the work to use as a ballet the critic of the "Morning Times" in London said that the action did not fit the music very well, and yet the story of the ballet is almost precisely that of the symphonic poem, so that if anyone was at fault in this regard it must have been the composer. Here is the fable to which Balakirew wrote music, in the words of the programme notes (by William Hubbard Harris) of the Chicago Orchestra:

"In the narrow Dariel Pass, where the River Terek roars, covered with heavy mists, there rises an ancient tower, in which there lived Queen Thamar, an angel of beauty, a cruel, wily demon in thoughts, and yet at the same time divine. At her enchanting call the passing traveller entered the tower to take part in the banquet in progress

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there. Shouts and cries of revelry awakened echoes in the darkness, as if at a great feast a hundred young, pleasure-loving men and women were gathered, or as if, in that great tower, erstwhile forbidding, the celebration of funeral rites were taking place. At the break of day gloomy silence again reigned, broken only by the foaming Terek as it hurried away a corpse. At this moment there appeared at the window a pale shadow. It waved afar a last farewell to the loved one. That farewell breathed such tender ecstasy, the voice which uttered it was so sweet, that its every accent, filled with promise, seemed to tell of near, unspeakable happiness."

Only in its conclusion does the ballet action vary from this story. The Queen lures the Prince to his doom, dances with him as the centre of a bacchanale, and then gives him the knife-thrust, as her slaves hurl him through an opened door into the river. But as the curtain falls we see her, not waving farewell to her old victim, but waving welcome to a new one.

Perhaps the composer really was at fault, because the music has never made a profound impression in this country. Here is W. J. Hender-

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son's account of it in "The Sun," following the performance by the Russian Symphony Society:

"Tamara was a queen, and she dwelt by the River Terek in an ancient tower, where she was wont to indulge in nights *à la Cléopâtre russe*. In the mornings the dead bodies of her lovers went floating down the stream, while she sang exquisite love-songs, just as if her lovers could be lured back. In the music of Balakirew one could hear the river, which sounded much like the Rhine, even to suggestions of the Drachenfels. The riotous nights were perhaps less clearly indicated. They were somewhat repressed, muffled, as it were. Perhaps Tamara, out of consideration for the neighbors, used to shut the windows when she was holding high jinks on the banks of the blue Terek in the Caucasus. But they had long nights up there, for the listener sitting outside the tower (in a hard orchestra chair) and waiting for the exquisite love-song, grew stiff and cold. And, after all, it was a mean little love-song, because it had no tune, and it would not have lured a red-headed boy, let alone a dead man."

However, Mr. Henderson had not seen Karsavina as the wicked queen when he wrote those lines,

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nor had he seen Bakst's gorgeous Georgian costumes—a variant, it is true, of the greens and blues with which he had decorated *Sheherazade*. The fault of the ballet, as a whole, is that it is reminiscent of *Sheherazade*; and yet it is effective and has persisted in the répertoire of the Russians since it was first given in 1912. The overdresses of the women gave rise to one of the fashions in women's gowns which spread over our world two years ago.

Rimsky-Korsakow's *Sheherazade* is another matter. The music was not written to accompany the story used in the ballet, and yet it fits it perfectly. Still, Mme. Rimsky-Korsakow (the composer, of course, is dead) protested violently against what she called a desecration of her husband's intention, when the ballet was first produced. (A similar protest was lodged against the organization in 1914, when it produced Rimsky-Korsakow's last opera, *The Golden Cock*, with a double cast, one choreographic and one vocal, although the opera had been written to be *sung*.) No piece of music is better known in the concert hall than this, and any concert-goer will remember the violin theme which portrays the last of the Sultan's wives, as

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she relates the four stories from the "Arabian Nights" which the four movements of the Suite describe. The ballet follows the action of the prologue of these stories; the women of the harem steal the keys from the grand eunuch and let loose the black slaves for a drunken revel of lust, which is interrupted by the sudden return of the sultan and death to all concerned. The third movement, that which in the Suite describes the love of the young prince and the young princess, was omitted from Fokine's original arrangement of the ballet, but in 1914 he added this movement to the action. *Sheherazade* has been considered since the time it was first produced in Paris some six years ago, the masterpiece of the Russians. It made the designer of its scenery and costumes, Leon Bakst, famous. His color-scheme, mostly of greens, blues, and oranges, has been frequently imitated in later theatrical productions. Karsavina's Zobeide is a suggestive picture of languorous lust, and Nijinsky, as the principal slave, alternates between surprising leaps into the air and the most lascivious gestures, as, like some animal, he paws the reclining Sultana.

L'Après-midi d'un Faune is as well known as

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Sheherazade in the concert room. This was the first ballet which Nijinsky staged (he also enacted the principal rôle). The music was written by Debussy as a prelude to Mallarmé's somewhat obscure poem. An English translation, at least an acceptable one, has hitherto been lacking, but Walter Conrad Arensberg's very sympathetic and understanding version has just appeared; were it not for its length I should like to transcribe it here. When Debussy's work is performed Edmund Gosse's summary of his idea of the meaning of the poem (with which, by the way, the poet expressed himself as entirely pleased) usually appears in the programme notes. But Debussy's music is called a *prélude* to the poem and so the action of the ballet is a prelude to the wonderings of Mallarmé's faun. This is the scenario as it was printed in the programmes given out for the first Paris performances:

“Ce n'est pas *l'Après-midi d'un Faune* de Stéphane Mallarmé; c'est, sur le prélude musical à cet épisode panique, une courte scène qui la précède:

“Un Faune sommeille;

“Des Nymphes le dupent;

“Une écharpe oubliée satisfait son rêve.

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“Le rideau baisse pour que le poème commence dans toutes les mémoires.”

There are, I think, seven nymphs engaged in the performance. Their dresses and their action are suggestive of the figures of Greek vases and bas-reliefs. One after another they flee from the strangely misunderstanding faun, until one, bolder than the others, approaches, almost to remain. The faun still does not understand and she, too, flees, dropping her scarf behind her. This the faun seizes and, as the curtain descends, returning to his rock, he presses this scarf to his lips and breast, at last, apparently, something more than the faun he has been. Nijinsky in this pantomime (it can scarcely be called a ballet) suggests all that the poem and the music call forth in imaginative minds. He has dehumanized the characters and, in a sense, thereby taken away the sting of the too intense voluptuousness of the action. However, in spite of this fact, and the further one that Monsieur Debussy, unlike Mme. Rimsky-Korsakow, not only approved of the use of his music in this form but even applauded it, the first performance in Paris (1912) was roundly hissed. Paul Souday, a well-known critic, led the opposition, and

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Rodin took up the cudgels for the defence. "Accusé d'avoir 'offensé la morale,' Nijinsky s'est empressé de donner satisfaction à M. Paul Souday en supprimant sa 'mimique indécente' à la fin du ballet. Et pourtant, son illusoire possession de la nymphe enfuïée, ce corps étendu sur le voile encore parfumé d'elle, c'était beau!" wrote Gauthier-Villars. It is true that Nijinsky altered his original performance for a few evenings; then, however, he returned to his original conception. Meanwhile, the troupe moved to London, where *l'Après-midi d'un Faune* was acclaimed above all the other ballets, and almost invariably repeated. Since then it has seldom been given in London and Paris without the audience demanding a repetition.

Les Sylphides, *Papillons*, *Carnaval*, and *Le Spectre de la Rose*, are all exquisite studies of a different style from the three ballets I have mentioned. *Carnaval* is undoubtedly the best of the lot, although Nijinsky as the rose ghost (the fable was suggested by a poem of Théophile Gautier) who comes to a young girl in a dream and bounds out of the window, like a spirit, at dawn, is in his most poetical mood. *Papillons* is the newest of these four ballets, and for it Bakst designed some

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charming crinolined dresses. Pierrot, in the garden, after the dance, has set a candle to catch butterflies, and as the dancers flit out, each pretending to be a butterfly, he tries to catch them, until the coming of their parents to take them home teaches him the bitter truth that they are only young girls. The music is by Schumann, orchestrated by Tcherepnine. *Les Sylphides* is little more than a suite of dances in a charming adaptation by Bakst of the conventional ballet costume. Glazunow and other Russian composers have orchestrated these Chopin waltzes, mazurkas and preludes. In *Carnaval* (orchestrated by Tcherepnine, Glazunow, Liadow, and Rimsky-Korsakow) the fanciful names by which Schumann designated several movements in these delightful piano pieces are transferred to the characters. Nijinsky is the Harlequin; Karsavina, Colombine, etc., while such pieces as *Dancing Letters* and *Paganini* are used as divertissements. The scene, with the two Victorian sofas at the back and Pierrot lying over the footlights, is charming. The principal characters are those of the *Commedia dell' Arte*, while the other dancers are dressed after the period of about 1830.

Le Dieu Bleu I have not seen, but I transfer the

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following account of it from the "London Times" of February 28, 1913, in which the critic says that "it introduces us to Mme. Karsavina and M. Nijinsky in two new rôles which suit them well, and it gives good opportunities for the combination of music, dancing, and spectacle for which M. de Diaghilew's troupe is famous—a combination designed this time to suggest what Goldsmith's Citizen of the World had in mind when he spoke of the 'furniture, frippery, and fireworks of China.' The scene is not precisely China in this case, but 'India of the fables,' which in the theatre comes to much the same thing, the point only being that it is the Far Orient, where a glamour of riotous colour is thrown over man's actions, and where gods and monsters are as near to us and as alive as the priests and populace who worship them.

"When the curtain goes up we see M. Bakst's design of a temple cut into a rock, with a glimpse of the sky seen through a cleft at the back, and in the middle a pool on which is floating (or ought to have been, for it was invisible last night) the sacred lotus. A young man is about to be initiated into the priesthood. He is surrounded by a crowd of worshippers, who bring offerings of fruits,

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flowers and peacocks to the shrine, and, generally speaking, occupy themselves in providing the requisite amount of furniture and frippery. Suddenly there is a tumult at the back, and a young girl (Mme. Karsavina) pushes her way in past the guards and falls at the feet of her lover, the would-be initiate, imploring him not to desert her for the priesthood. He is at first indifferent, but gradually his religious ecstasy passes off as she recalls their old life together, and eventually, with an abrupt gesture, he throws himself into her arms. The priests, in consternation, hurry him off into the back premises, and after handcuffing the girl, leave her in the darkness, where (like Tamino in the caverns) she is told she will meet her trial and punishment. After long moments of suspense, during which night falls, she pushes open a door through which she sees a chance of escape, and immediately seven obscene monsters crawl out and are about to drag her with them when, in despair, she appeals to the sacred lotus in the pool. The lotus thereupon turns into the goddess, who rises with the blue god from the water. And then the fireworks began, for the blue god was M. Nijinsky, who at once set to work to draw the teeth, so to

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speak, of the monsters and to make even the trees and flowers 'bow themselves when he did dance,' thus proving satisfactorily that M. Salomon Reinach and his friends knew what they were about in maintaining that Orpheus came over the mountains from the East. The miracle accomplished, the priests come in to take note of it, the young lovers fall into each other's arms, the goddess retires to the lake, and the god goes up a staircase, which is disclosed behind by the removal of a mountain, and remains glued to it, in spite of the stage directions that he is supposed to fly to heaven. Being a god, he presumably thought he could please himself.

"The scenario does not give quite so many opportunities to M. Reynaldo Hahn as to MM. Bakst and Fokine, who are responsible for the pictorial and choreographic sides of the ballet. The theme associated with the god is the most striking. The dance with the peacocks is attractive, there are some beautiful moments when the young girl appeals to her lover, and their duet of joy at the end is spirited, but much of the music is lacking in character and the energy of the dance. It is written with the beautifully clear technique to which

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M. Hahn has accustomed us, but there is little driving force in it, and not a touch of passion in the scenes where passion is wanted to give contrast to the personal movements of the crowd or the calm atmosphere of the divinities."

Le Pavillon d'Armide is a graceful combination of two picturesque periods of romantic art, for a French Vicomte, storm-stayed on his travels, is offered hospitality by a Marquis, who lodges him in a pavilion of his castle, where the Gobelin tapestry comes to life during the night. The whole thing is, of course, a dream, in which the Vicomte sees in the Magician of the tapestry the person of his host, and himself plays the part of Rinaldo (the characters are those of Quinault's play set to music by Lulli and Gluck). When the change comes and Armida and her court come to life, what really comes to life is the court of Versailles; here is the Grand Monarque himself, and there the most enchanting group of knights in pink with feather head-dresses dance with ladies whose costumes combine the grace of Watteau with the conventional dancing-skirt with the happiest results.

In the dances from *Prince Igor*, accompanied by a chorus, the Russians loosen their restraint to a

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degree which would mean a totally unrestrained performance in the hands of another group of dancers. It is almost impossible to believe, after witnessing these wild Polovtsian dances, that the action has been perfectly ordered by Fokine and can be repeated exactly at any time. The ballet occupies almost all of the fourth act of Borodine's opera. I believe that the choruses to which these dances are performed were sung at a concert of the MacDowell Chorus in Carnegie Hall, March 3, 1911. The New York Winter Garden once utilized the music for a ballet. The scene used by the Russians, painted by Roerich, is marvelously suggestive of barbarism; the now languorous, now passionate music, pulsing with rhythm, is admirably adapted to dancing. Usually Mme. Fokina and Bolm are seen in these dances, but it is the ballet corps itself which becomes the important feature in their success.

"How excellently," says one foreign critic, "every means that the theatre offers has been made use of to produce the desired effect; the menace of the coming cloud of barbarians that is to lie for centuries on the desolate face of Russia (for we are in the camp of the Polovtsians, forerunners of the

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great invasion); not the loud blustering of a Tamburlaine the Great, but the awful, quiet vigor, half melancholy, half playful, of a tribe that is but a little unit in the swarm; the infinite horizons of the steppe, with the line of the buried *tumuli* stretching away to endless times and places, down the centuries into Siberia; the long-drawn, resigned, egoless music (Borodine drew his themes from real Tartar-Mongol sources); the women that crouch, unconscious of themselves, or rise and stretch lazy limbs, and in the end fling themselves carelessly prone when their dance is over; the savage-joyful panther leaping of the men; the stamping feet and quick, nerve-racking beat of the drum; and more threatening than all, the gambolling of the boys, like kittens unwittingly preparing themselves for the future chase."

But whose is the guiding hand, the hand that combines the rhythms, the colors, and the human element in these works? It is Fokine's; without Fokine I do not see very well how these ballets could come into existence. (I am now speaking of Fokine, of course, entirely as a producer. He is also known as a dancer. One must bear in mind, also, that Nijinsky's three ballets—he contrived

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the action for *l'Après-midi d'un Faune*, *Jeux*, and *The Sacrifice to the Spring*—were very original and effective.) Until Fokine began to work, the ballet-master had been content to arrange all his *coryphées* in straight lines across the stage, each dancer making the same simultaneous movement as her neighbor. Fokine divined the ineffectiveness of this false symmetry. He divided his forces into many groups, each group a unit in movement. (The ultimate result of the application of this principle was Nijinsky's staging of *The Sacrifice to the Spring*, in which each dancer was set a separate simultaneous task.) Nor did Fokine allow any one group of dancers the whole of any movement in the music. He subdivided the movements into phrases. He really divided his ballet into choirs, just as Richard Strauss and Reger subdivided the orchestra, in which, in the time of Bellini and Donizetti, large bodies of the strings used to play in unison. Then each choir was given certain phrases to interpret, some in the background, some in the foreground, until the polyphony of the music was perfectly synchronized with the action of the ballet. Many of the ideas for Fokine's ballets were derived from pictures. It is

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possible to see at once the pictorial resemblance between *The Legend of Joseph* and Veronese's *The Marriage at Cana*, or between *Midas* and Mantegna's *Parnasse* in the Louvre. But Fokine also learned how to control movement, and how to preserve balance from pictures. In the Accademia di Belle Arti in Venice there is a room devoted to large paintings by Gentile Bellini and Vittore Carpaccio, depicting events in Venetian history. In one of them is a procession, and a study of the different groups of marchers and bystanders will give you an excellent idea of the effective and pictorial intricacy of a Fokine ballet. In *The Legend of Joseph* Fokine attains one of his most thrilling effects in the last scene, where the handmaidens of the refused Potiphar's wife, clad in black gauze, with bare arms and legs, wave their arms in a frenzy of hysterical disdain at the offending Joseph. Shortly after seeing the ballet, in walking through the Egyptian rooms of the British Museum, I came across an Egyptian fresco which almost seemed to me at first, in the exact spirit in which Fokine had caught its feeling, to be a photograph of the action I had seen on the stage.

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Russians are natural dancers. It is said that only Russians and Poles can learn to do the mazurka properly, in which the women engage in that peculiar gliding step which someone characterized as the definite expression of Meredith's phrase, "gliding women." So, under the guidance of Fokine, with the inspiration which such music and color as are provided for them can give, the Russians engaged in the carrying out of these ballets easily rise to an unattainable (for other dancers) height of seeming spontaneity. They have that "like-to-do-it" and creative (as opposed to reproductive) air which every stage director knows is almost impossible to instill into a large company with any hope that it will be retained after the first performance. But the Russians never lose it. A ballet, given so often as *Sheherazade*, during a period extending over many seasons, always seems freshly produced. There are no slovenly details. The wild orgy of the Polovtsian dances of *Prince Igor* is invariably exposed with a feeling on the part of the spectator that he is witnessing the intense enjoyment of the participants.

Another important point is the variety in the ballets, a variety which covers not only subject

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and music, but also treatment in decoration and staging, so that such an ultra-modern work as *The Sacrifice to the Spring*, staged by Nijinsky in an attempt to emulate the style of the futurists in painting, with music by Strawinsky, who might be called a master of dissonance, and with decorations in hard and primitive colors by Roerich, finds itself naturally side by side with the charming and poetic *Sylphides*, gracefully staged by Fokine, with music by Chopin (orchestrated), and with decorations in pale green and white by Bakst. Of course, some ballets, because of their fables, or the nature of their music, naturally resemble one another. *Sheherazade*, *Cléopâtre*, and *Thamar* all have certain points in common; so have *Les Sylphides*, *Carnaval*, and *Papillons*. There is a resemblance between *Daphnis et Chloë*, *Narcisse*, and *l'Après-midi d'un Faune*. But it is easy to vary these likenesses by not putting them into juxtaposition, by mingling them with the bizarre *Petrouchka*, the barbaric Polovtsian dances from *Prince Igor*, the idealistic *Spectre de la Rose*, with Weber's *Invitation to the Dance* as its accompaniment, the gorgeous and pompous *Legend of Joseph*, the frivolous *Midas*, the exotic *Le Dieu*

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Bleu, or the pageantry of the dances from Rimsky-Korsakow's *Sadko*.

It is impossible, of course, to ignore the genius and virtuosity of individual interpretation entirely in a study of the Russian Ballet, minimize as one may its importance. There have been very many pages written in an attempt to capture the charm and genius of Nijinsky on paper. He has been described variously as "half-human, half-god," as a tongue of flame, and as a jet of water spurting from a fountain. The word "youth" expresses something of the wonder of this marvelous boy. He never seems to be doing anything difficult, and yet his command of technique is incredible. He always seems spontaneous, and yet I have been told that, like Olive Fremstad, he does not make the slightest movement of a finger which has not been carefully thought out. He seems to me to be the greatest of stage artists (and I include all concert musicians as well as opera singers and actors in this sweeping statement). I mean by this that he communicates more of beauty and emotion to me as a spectator than other interpretative artists do. All impressions of this sort are necessarily personal, but they do not for that reason

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lack value. It is essential, however, to see Nijinsky in a variety of parts to get his true measure. As the lover of the sylphs in *Les Sylphides* he is a pale *efféminé*, a Chopiniac, a charming Aubrey Beardsley drawing, a lovely thing in line, and grace, and sentiment. In *Petrouchka* he is a puppet, and—remarkable touch—a puppet with a soul. His performance in this ballet (the characters are marionettes, but the story is something like that of *Pagliacci*) is, perhaps, his most wonderful achievement. He suggests only the puppet in action; his facial expression never changes; yet the pathos is greater, more keenly carried over the footlights, than one would imagine possible under any conditions. I have seen Fokine in the same rôle, and although he gives you all the gestures, the result is not the same. It is genius that Nijinsky puts into his interpretation of the part. Who can ever forget Nijinsky as Petrouchka when thrown by his master into his queer black box, mad with love for the dancer, who, in turn, prefers the Moor puppet, rushing about waving his pathetically stiff arms in the air, and finally beating his way with his clenched fists through the paper window and cursing the stars? It is a more

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poignant expression of grief than most Romeos can give us. *Joux* shows us the love games of a trio (two women and a man) searching for a tennis ball in a garden at twilight. It recalls itself to me chiefly for the *glissando* (the music is by Debussy) with which the ballet begins as the tennis ball bounces across the stage, followed by Nijinsky, who bounds across the broad stage of the Théâtre des Champs Elysées in Paris in two leaps. These leaps are triumphs of dexterity, grace of motion, and thrill, and he does not waste them. They have given rise to the rumor that Nijinsky's element is the air. In *l'Après-midi d'un Faune* he makes only one of these quick movements, but with such astonishing effect that on one occasion (it was the third time I had seen this stage arrangement of Debussy's prelude to Mallarmé's poem) my companion, a well-known dramatic critic who sits stolidly through performances by all the great tragedians, burst into tears. In *Sheherazade*, as the black slave of the harem who dominates the story of the ballet, Nijinsky utilizes his leap to dominate the bacchanale, which is the climax of that piece of sensual excitement. As the crowd of women, wives of the sultan, and black slaves, drunk with

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wine and lust, enter into the wildest dance, the negro in silver trousers in the centre of the stage leaps higher and higher straight into the air above the heads of his companions. . . . The descent, with the indescribable curve of the legs, is something to be seen. In *Carnaval*, Nijinsky enacts the Harlequin with great roguishness and impertinence. To the piece called *Reconnaissance* he dances with Karsavina, as Colombine, the most entrancing of polkas. His dancing of the piece called *Paganini*, however, is most memorable. At that point where the dominant seventh on E flat emerges through a deft use of the pedal, he represents the effect to perfection by suddenly sitting down, as a writer on the "London Times" once noted. It is not, as a matter of fact, as a mere dancer that Nijinsky excels, although he *does* excel even there, but it is in the poetic interpretation of his rôle, the genius in his playing, that he expresses so much more than his nearest rival. He is incomparable as a dancer, as you may very well see in works like *Carnaval* and *Les Sylphides*, in which dancing dominates the action; but even in these ballets he never loses sight of characterization, and the shaded values of ensemble.

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Tamara Karsavina is a very beautiful woman, although her beauty has not the subtle quality of the more gifted Anna Pavlowa. She is an artist and a fine dancer, a mime of great talent. She fits more perfectly into an ensemble scheme than Pavlowa, who was once a member of this organization herself. She is delicate and flower-like and she suggests vice with a great degree of verisimilitude. Her Salome, with the painted roses on her nude knees and breasts, is a fragile bit of decadence. As the temptress Queen of *The Golden Cock* she suggests the strange perverted power of a Kundry, an Astarte, or a Loreley. In *The Legend of Joseph* it is her duty to sit at a table without changing her expression throughout almost an entire act. It is a difficult task; one must perceive the depths of the woman's boredom, which does not express itself even in impatience, and she must dominate the scene. She accomplishes her tasks beautifully, as she does also the long walk across the stage in stilted Venetian shoes at the close of the scene. In *Petrouchka* she is a fitting companion to Nijinsky, and her little dance with the cornet is a delicious and entrancing moment; her Chloë is exquisite, soft, Greek, and girlish, and in

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Ravel's ballet and in Florent Schmitt's *Salome* she dances *on her toes* in bare feet (remember that half the so-called "toe-dancers" resort to padded and reinforced slippers for their power). I never lack enthusiasm for Karsavina; but I cannot place her near Nijinsky.

The crescendo of eulogy with which these notes progress seems unavoidable. If one is in sympathy with the aims of this group of artists (Gordon Craig is not, I believe), one must recognize the success with which they have carried them out. Naturally, there are flaws. Doboujinsky's costumes for *Midas* are certainly very hard in color; Steinberg's music for the same ballet, a series of futile brass blares; the story itself (Bakst *should* confine himself to painting), a bore. Miassine is scarcely the dancer one would have chosen for so important a rôle as Joseph, which, on the other hand, he is suited to physically. Karsavina's portrayal of the ultimate emotions of Potiphar's wife is a little unconvincing. I do not even admire Bakst's setting for his very lovely costumes in *l'Après-midi d'un Faune*. But these are very small insects in the amber of enjoyment.

November, 1915.

Igor Strawinsky: A New Composer



Strawinsky: A New Composer

IN America we are not accustomed to look to performances of the ballet, which, after all, is not an institution with us, for musical manna. There have doubtless been ballets given here with music by composers whose names occur in Grove's Dictionary, sometimes performed by a fairly good band, but we have not expected, or received, revelations on these occasions. Since the Russian Ballet (the organization directed by Serge de Diaghilew) has travelled to and fro in Europe, Paris, and more especially London, have learned a thing or two in this respect. For much of the most interesting of the modern music has been brought to these cities by the Russians, who include not only ballet but also opera in their repertoire. They are responsible for the productions, outside of Russia, of Moussorgsky's two operas, *Boris Godunow* and *La Khovanchina* (this latter music-drama was not produced by the Imperial Theatres in Russia until over twenty years after its publication in the Rimsky-Korsakow version. Its presentation at Moscow took place after its Paris and London performances, and at Petrograd

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only a month or so before!); Rimsky-Korsakow's operas, *Ivan the Terrible*, *A Night in May*, and *The Golden Cock*; and Borodine's *Prince Igor*. As for ballets, Richard Strauss wrote *The Legend of Joseph* for these dancers; Maurice Ravel, *Daphnis et Chloë*; Debussy, *Jeux*; Reynaldo Hahn, *Le Dieu Bleu*; Paul Dukas, *La Péri* (to be sure, this work was finally produced under other auspices; withdrawn by the composer from the Russians a few days before the date set for the first performance, on the ground that insufficient time had been allotted for rehearsals); and Tcherepnine, *Narcisse* and *Le Pavillon d'Armide*; but most important of all are the three ballets (and the lyric drama) contributed by Igor Strawinsky, who has, in a sense, developed a new medium out of the orchestra by writing a new language for it, although it may be plainly seen that he is the logical descendant of the really Russian composers (brushing aside the Tschaikowsky-Rubinstein interlude; nationalism was, of course, no object with these musicians). There are suggestions of Strawinsky's style so far back as Glinka, in the Oriental dances of *Ruslan and Luidmilla*. You will find the germs of his method in Borodine's symphonies; from

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Moussorgsky to Strawinsky is but a step, especially if you refer to the original text of *Boris Godunow* and not the Rimsky-Korsakow version. In fact, Strawinsky, in spite of his radical departures from academic methods, is the inevitable defender of the faith of the famous "Five" whose slogan was "Nationalism and Truth." As all real progress in art is dependent, in a measure, on the past, it is necessary to establish this fact.

My personal impressions of this young Russian's music and its effect on me are very strong. I attended the first performance in Paris of Strawinsky's anarchistic (against the canons of academic art) ballet, *The Sacrifice to the Spring*, in which primitive emotions are both depicted and aroused by a dependence on barbarous rhythm, in which melody and harmony, as even so late a composer as Richard Strauss understands them, do not enter. A certain part of the audience, thrilled by what it considered a blasphemous attempt to destroy music as an art, and swept away with wrath, began very soon after the rise of the curtain to whistle, to make cat-calls, and to offer audible suggestions as to how the performance should proceed. Others of us, who liked the music and felt

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that the principles of free speech were at stake, bellowed defiance. It was war over art for the rest of the evening and the orchestra played on unheard, except occasionally when a slight lull occurred. The figures on the stage danced in time to music they had to imagine they heard and beautifully out of rhythm with the uproar in the auditorium. I was sitting in a box in which I had rented one seat. Three ladies sat in front of me and a young man occupied the place behind me. He stood up during the course of the ballet to enable himself to see more clearly. The intense excitement under which he was laboring, thanks to the potent force of the music, betrayed itself presently when he began to beat rhythmically on the top of my head with his fists. My emotion was so great that I did not feel the blows for some time. They were perfectly synchronized with the beat of the music. When I did, I turned around. His apology was sincere. We had both been carried beyond ourselves. Later, when the public's attitude had assumed a more formal aspect, I had a better opportunity for studying the score of this ballet.

My second personal impression is a memory of

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an evening a few nights later, when I attended a performance of Strawinsky's earlier ballet, *Petrouchka*. *Petrouchka* is another kind of entertainment. It was a success with the public from the beginning, and is still an important feature in the répertoire of the Russian Ballet. It is by *Petrouchka*, in fact, that Strawinsky will be introduced to New York by the Russians during the current season. . . . The curtains had closed on these pathetic scenes from the Russian carnival. They were drawn back to disclose Karsavina and Nijinsky. Presently a third figure appeared, very thin and short, with a Jewish profile (I do not know, however, that Strawinsky is a Jew). Dragged on the stage by Nijinsky, pale, awkward, and timid, his near-sighted eyes blinded by the footlights, the composer bowed his acknowledgments to the applause, nervously fingering his eyeglasses. This account would be incomplete without a reference to his dress, as irreproachable in fit and texture as that of Arturo Toscanini.

A London experience is also worth the telling. It happened after the first performance there of *The Nightingale*, a lyric drama to set a pace in the race towards the future. There was a long

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intermission after this short opera before the continuation of the bill, which included a performance of *The Legend of Joseph*, the composer himself conducting, and Steinberg's *Midas*. In the foyer I met my friend Alfred Hertz. Those who know this conductor are familiar with his moods. Tired, after a rehearsal of *Parsifal*, or excited before the performance of a work which he is about to conduct for the first time, he becomes *distract* and un-conversational to a degree which would not seem possible in a man who ordinarily is as fond of anecdote as he is of Viennese pastry. I recognized his mood on this occasion. Mopping his brow (it was June), he was good enough to explain.

"I can't stay here any longer," he said. "It's very embarrassing. Strauss asked me to come. I am here as his guest to hear *The Legend of Joseph*, but I can't listen to it. I'm too tired—I am exhausted. I have never heard such extraordinary music. I have never been so moved, so excited before at the performance of a new opera. . . . Oh, if I could have the privilege of introducing that work to New York, then I should be happy!"

I am very glad to quote these words to the lasting honor of one who realized at once the pleasure

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that Strawinsky's music, quite in a new mode, would give to the coming generation, and to a few in the present.

M. D. Calvocoressi, I believe, had the honor of signing the first article in English about Strawinsky, shortly after the production of *The Firebird* in Paris. Mr. Calvocoressi is to musicians what Mr. George Moore, who introduced Paul Verlaine, Jules Laforgue, and Arthur Rimbaud to English readers, has been to poets—an appreciator of contemporaries. This is a rare trait, one not possessed by John Runciman of the "Saturday Review" or by several other prominent critics, whose names instantly spring to mind. The initial article in English about the young Russian composer appeared in the London "Musical Times" for August 1, 1911. Since then Mr. Calvocoressi has written much on the subject, and a good deal of his information seems to have been gleaned from headquarters, since he quotes Strawinsky freely. (This critic is, of course, particularly interested in Russian music. He translated Balakirew's songs into French, and wrote a life of Moussorgsky.) With the words of the composer as a guide, Mr. Calvocoressi has made a most interesting discovery,

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that in the lyric-drama music of this young man "working-out" plays no part. There is no development in the music of *The Nightingale*; the music simply expresses what the text dictates it shall express as it goes along. (In this respect, of course, Strawinsky is but following an ukase of the "Five" to its logical conclusion; they, in their desire to create a national school, chose as the best means of banishing any suggestion of Wagner, whose theories were generally being blindly accepted and adopted by composers of music dramas at this epoch, the banning of the use of the *leitmotiv*. However, they repeated themes and melodies, and Moussorgsky in *Boris* brings back the bells that served to ring in Boris's coronation, in broken rhythm to ring out his life.)

In regard to this matter Strawinsky has put himself on record as saying, "I want to suggest neither situations nor emotions, but simply to manifest, to express them. I think there is in what are called 'impressionist' methods a certain amount of hypocrisy, or at least a tendency towards vagueness and ambiguity. That I shun above all things, and that, perhaps, is the reason why my methods differ as much from those of the impressionists as

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they differ from academic conventional methods. Though I often find it extremely hard to do so, I always aim at straightforward expression in its simplest form. I have no use for 'working-out' in dramatic or lyric music. The one essential thing is to feel and to convey one's feelings."

This, of course, is a more elaborate version of what Moussorgsky said, "Plain truth, however unpalatable, and nothing more. No half measures; ornamentation is superfluity."

In one of Mr. Calvocoressi's recent articles about Strawinsky that critic says, in lines which illuminate: "According to the modern conception of the lyric drama, the chief quality of dramatic music is terseness—a quality most uncommon in all kinds of music, and which many will, not altogether wrongly, think almost incompatible with the very essence of musical art. The principle of music as generally understood appears to be amplification, repetition.

At all events, the art of music has always consisted chiefly in that of 'working-out.' And it is but of late that a number of music-makers and music-expounders have raised an outcry against prolixity and redundancy in music: an outcry, it

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must be added, that for the present does not find much echo among the majority of art judges nor of the public.

“The first of great musicians to abjure the principle of formal, elaborate ‘working-out’ in dramatic and lyric music was Moussorgsky. A striking peculiarity of his best songs and of his masterpiece, *Boris Godunow*, is the absolute lack, not only of anything resembling tautology or amplification, *per se*, but of all that is not absolutely essential to direct expression (including many devices which no other musician of the time would have dreamt of leaving out), even if the omission be in defiance of tonal construction and balance.

“For instance, the song, *The Orphan*, ends very dramatically on the suspensive harmony of the dominant. *Death’s Lullaby*, which depicts a dialogue between a horror-stricken mother and Death, who comes to take away a child, ends abruptly on the burden of Death’s last utterance, with which the composer’s intention is fulfilled. He never gives a thought to the practice of bringing back the main key which would have led him either to an inappropriate modulation or to a superfluous addition. Similarly, *Boris Godunow*, in the authen-

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tic version, ends, without even a cadence, on a chord that hardly leaves the impression of the tonic."

Mr. Calvocoressi points out the fact that there are few passages for orchestra alone in *Boris* outside of the *polonaise* and the very brief preludes to the acts, and he asks us to observe the working of the same principle in *Pelléas et Mélisande*, in which it is evident that Debussy was influenced by Moussorgsky. Schoenberg was the first to apply this principle to orchestral music. However, if an opera-goer finds much to enjoy in the dramas of Moussorgsky and Strawinsky, it does not necessarily follow that all the value of a work like *Die Walküre* disappears, to his ears. The two principles of art are different; each, perhaps, is equally valid.

"But the fact is that a new factor has appeared in the domain of dramatic music, which is now entering a new path; and consequently a new order of artistic pleasure may be the outcome of this stage of evolution. The first consequence, of course, is a greater differentiation between the style of dramatic music and the style of instrumental music; unquestionably a progress, since it

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widens the range of methods and gives greater freedom to the composer's imagination."

All of this is very stimulating, and very true; still, it cannot be said that audiences as a whole grasp Strawinsky's intention, as it is exploited in *The Nightingale*, so readily as they do Moussorgsky's as manifested in *Boris Godunow*. Rimsky-Korsakow's emendations of the latter work, which one critic has labeled as mutilations, may be responsible for the greater public reaction. But the success of *Boris* was by no means immediate. Produced in Petrograd in 1874, it was not heard in Paris until nearly thirty years later, nor in New York until 1913. Musicians, in the meantime, had had access to the score, and had adopted some of the Moussorgsky idiom as their own. When *Boris* was at last produced here it was not, therefore, the utter novelty that *The Nightingale* now seems. The very principle of the new music demands a greater effort at concentration than can be expected of most audiences when they are listening to music, as many ears catch the meaning of a phrase only after it has been repeated a convenient number of times. This is one of the chief reasons for the popular success of *The Ring*

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dramas. It seems incredible, and impertinent, to the average audience that a composer should have had the idea of expressing himself without repeating himself. A catalogue of representative themes would be of no use to a prospective auditor of *The Nightingale*. Now, there are two advantages to this method, aside from the implied advantage of an improvement in effect: First, it makes for a very short opera (*The Nightingale*, in three acts, is so short that at its early performances it was given in a bill with two ballets, one of which, *The Legend of Joseph*, runs for over an hour); second, the audience is not called upon to listen intellectually (nor should it be, at the performance of an opera). The only intention of the composer is to make his listeners *feel* each situation he illustrates with his music. It may be said that Wagner's intention was the same, and thereby lies the difficulty in training listeners to understand the new principle. Wagner's way is easier for them because they can get the emotional feeling *through the intellect*. The repetition of themes would not in itself assure an effect, but the labeling of these themes does just that, so that whenever the *Sword motif* or the *Siegfried motif* occurs, the *mind* of

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the listener, knowing the name of the theme, is perfectly prepared to create the emotional reaction demanded by the composer. Strawinsky appeals directly to the emotions. On the listener who expects a theme to reappear again and again he makes only the impression of being a noise-maker (in the sense of a worker in dissonance; *The Nightingale* is most continent in sound). But on the open-minded auditor his effect is usually astounding.

The story of the music-drama closely follows the Hans Andersen tale. In the first act a deputation from the Chinese Emperor's court, headed by the kitchen-maid, seeks the nightingale in its grove. The Imperial Chancellor, the Bonze, and a number of courtiers are included in this strange procession, which follows the kitchen-maid, as she alone knows the bird's song, to request the nightingale to come to the court to cheer up the melancholy ruler. Although loath to leave its quiet groves, the bird agrees to go.

In the second act the nightingale's arrival has stirred the Emperor's jaded senses. However, the present of a mechanical bird which comes from Japan diverts his attention. In the meantime, the

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real nightingale has disappeared. The Emperor orders the little brown songster banished from all China, while he places the mechanical toy by his bedside.

Death stands in the Emperor's bedchamber in the third act. Torn by his aching conscience, the dying ruler calls in vain for his musicians to make him forget. But the nightingale returns and so charms Death with its songs that he agrees to allow the Emperor his life. The Emperor revives and offers his saviour a place at court, but the bird refuses and returns to its woodland haunts with the promise that it will sing each evening. Now the courtiers enter, prepared to find the Emperor dead. They are astounded when he sits up in bed and bids them "Good-morning!"

All the symbolism, all the undercurrents of suggestion contained in the text are never explicitly referred to except in the brief utterances of a minor character, the fisherman, who sings a prophecy or an explanation at the beginning and end of each act, foretelling the delight that will be caused by the songs of the bird, the distress that will follow its departure, and its final victory over Death.

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The book offers exceptional opportunities for excursions into imitative music such as Richard Strauss, to name one composer, would take delight in expanding into pages of detail, as many of the diverting incidents of Andersen's tale are carried over into the drama. In the first act, for example, the courtiers mistake the croaking of frogs and the lowing of cattle for the song of the bird; in the second act the ladies of the court fill their mouths with water and gargle in an attempt to imitate the nightingale's trill. These distractions do not serve to steer Strawinsky from his direct course. He notices them, of course, but in the briefest and most concise manner.

The score of *The Nightingale* calls for a large orchestra, although for a continent use of it. The list of instruments includes wood-winds by threes, with a piccolo, clarinet, bass clarinet, and double-bassoon, three trombones, tuba, and two cornets besides the usual two trumpets; two harps, two glockenspiels, a celesta, a pianoforte (this part is very important), and the whole of the usual percussion, to which are added small antique cymbals. The parts of the nightingale and the fisherman are also sung from the orchestra pit.

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The work was begun in 1909 (this date is disputed) and completed in 1914, when it received its first hearing in Paris in May. Strawinsky seems to have found difficulty in composing it. "I can write," he is reported to have said, "music to words, viz., songs; or music to action, viz., ballets. But the coöperation of music, words, and action is a thing that daily becomes more inadmissible to my mind. And even should I finish *The Nightingale*, I do not think I shall ever attempt to write another work of that kind."

Igor Strawinsky was born June 17 (June 5, Russian style), 1882, at Oranienbaum, near Petrograd. This date has been in dispute, and various authors have disagreed about it. My authority is Mr. Strawinsky himself. He was the son of a court-singer and was destined to study law. But, working assiduously with a pupil of Rubinstein, he became a remarkable pianist from the age of nine. He encountered Rimsky-Korsakow at Heidelberg in 1902 (when he was 20), and that Russian composer had a great influence on his career, although very little on his musical style. During this period Strawinsky attended concerts, visited museums, and delved in literature. Everything in the world of art is

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said to have awakened his curiosity. In 1903 he wrote the *allegro* of a sonata for the piano, of which the *andante*, *scherzo* and *finale* were completed the following year. Rimsky-Korsakow had accepted him as a pupil, and while the young man alarmed the older composer to some extent, he secretly predicted great success for the only one of his pupils who showed revolutionary tendencies. Strawinsky says that the composer of *Sheherazade* struggled valiantly with himself at this period in an effort not to restrict what might be beautiful in his pupil's anarchic methods, at the same time wishing to preserve his own ideals. In 1905-6 Strawinsky worked at orchestration, and during this period, as an exercise, he orchestrated his master's opera, *Pan Voyevode*, from the piano score. Subsequently his work was corrected by comparison with Rimsky-Korsakow's own scoring, recently completed. This might have been a dangerous exercise for a "sedulous ape," but Strawinsky was not that. He also orchestrated marches of Schubert and sonatas of Beethoven. His friends at this time were the group surrounding Rimsky-Korsakow, Chaliapine, César Cui, Glazunow, and Blumenfeld, the *chef d'orchestre*. Strawinsky was married January 11, 1906.

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Soon after his marriage he terminated his symphony in E flat (1905-7). It was performed in 1907, and was published later by Jurgenson. A song with orchestral accompaniment, *Le Faune et la Bergère*, dates from this period (1906), and in 1908 he completed his *Scherzo Fantastique*, which was inspired by a reading of Maeterlinck's "Life of the Bee." This has been played in Paris. Edward Burlingame Hill says of it: "In its long passages for staccato strings, divided into melodic phrases for wood-wind instruments and in fanciful figures for wind instruments, celesta, and harps, one can imagine the sinuous and yielding swaying of bees, iridescent with color, and pulsing with life." I do not think this work has been played in America. New York has not heard it. He set two poems of Gorodetzki to music in 1908. When Rimsky-Korsakow's daughter married Maximilien Steinberg in 1908, Strawinsky sent *Fireworks* as a wedding present, but before the post had delivered the gift the older composer was dead. As a tribute to his master's memory Strawinsky composed the *Chant Funèbre*, performed at the Belaïeff concerts. *Fireworks* has been played in New York both by the Russian and the New York Philharmonic Societies. Four piano études,

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written in the summer of 1908, have stood on my piano for some time. They are interesting. Vuillemoz says that Strawinsky began *The Nightingale* in this year; Calvocoressi's date is 1910; the programme at the first performance gave the date as 1909.

About this time an incident occurred which considerably changed the young composer's outlook, and which brought him to the attention of a larger world. He was "discovered" by the director of the Russian Ballet, Serge de Diaghilew, and commissioned to write a ballet on a Russian folk-story scenario fashioned by Michel Fokine. Leon Bakst and Golovine, the painters, completed the collaboration. The work, *The Firebird*, was terminated May 18, 1910, and produced three weeks later. The first sketches for this ballet must have been written before the death of Rimsky-Korsakow, if we are to believe a very delightful story told somewhere by Calvocoressi. On hearing Strawinsky play some bars of *The Firebird*, the older composer is quoted as saying: "Look here, stop playing that horrid thing; otherwise I might begin to enjoy it!" The production of *The Firebird* established the composer's reputation in Paris, and the

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very impressionists whose methods he has dubbed "hypocritical" were among the first to sign themselves his admirers. Of these Maurice Ravel was the leader. *Petrouchka* was completed just a year later (May 26, 1911), and its production by the Russian Ballet gave his fame a firm hold with the public. His third choreographic drama, *The Sacrifice to the Spring*, followed in 1913, and his opera, *The Nightingale*, in 1914. Several songs, including *Le petit Myosotis* and *Le Pigeon*, are other products of recent years.*

It is astonishing to learn that *The Nightingale* was begun so early in the composer's career, but it is still more astonishing to discover that the first sketches of *The Sacrifice to the Spring* were written before *Petrouchka* was conceived. That ballet, which achieved the great honor of being hissed in Paris (I have described the incident earlier in this article), is the work on which, with *The Nightingale*, rests his chief claim to being a composer with something new to say. The work differs from most of the mimed dramas given by the Russians in that it is practically without a fable. The scenes take place in barbaric Russia, long before

*See end of article for list of works.

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the Christian era, and we are introduced to rites connected with the worship of the soil and the springtide; after a series of ritual dances, one of the younger maidens is chosen as a sacrifice to the spring, whereupon she spares her friends the trouble of killing her by dancing herself to death. This exceedingly angular dance, the expression of religious hysteria, marvelously conceived by Nijinsky and thrice marvelously carried out by Mlle. Piltz, was one of the causes for the outbreaks at the early performances of the ballet.

The lack of a fable, the early and uncertain setting of the action, offered Strawinsky an opportunity which he seized with avidity. The music is not descriptive, it is rhythmical. All rhythms are beaten into the ears, one after another, and sometimes with complexities which seem decidedly unrhymic on paper, but when carried out in performance assume a regularity of beat which a simple four-four time could not equal. H. E. Krehbiel, in his valuable book, "Afro-American Folksongs," describes the tremendous effect made on him by the intricate rhythms (which he tried in vain to note down) of the musicians of African tribes at the World's Fair in Chicago. The rhyth-

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mic effect of *The Sacrifice to the Spring* is as powerful and complex. It is interesting to remember, in this connection, that the ancient Greeks accorded rhythm a higher place than either melody or harmony. Strawinsky describes the dawn of a spring morning in a few measures at the beginning of the prelude (~~here, it must be admitted, there is a startling reminder of *L'Après-midi d'un Faune*~~), and then he settles down to the business, and art, of providing material for dances. This he has done with consummate effect. In many cases his chord-formations could not be described in academic terms; the instruments employed add to the strangeness of the sounds. I remember one passage in which the entire corps of dancers is engaged in shivering, trembling from head to toe, to music which trembles also. It makes my flesh creep even to think of it again. At the beginning of the ballet the adolescents pound the earth with their feet, while a little old woman runs in and out between their legs, to the reiterated beat of a chord of F flat, A flat, C flat, F flat; G, B flat, D flat, and E flat, all in the bass (begin from below and read in order), while an occasional flute or a piccolo screams its way in high treble. Try this

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on your piano. "He has had recourse," writes Edward Burlingame Hill, "to a violently revolutionary style which is difficult to reduce to a systematic analysis. Chords employing minor and major triads simultaneously in different octaves, figures in double thirds, strange aggregations of notes that can hardly be described as chords, even with critical license, are the ingredients of this unusual style." M. Montagu-Nathan, in his "Short History of Russian Music," says: "In criticising the work, the mistake was made of suggesting that Strawinsky's music had gone back to an elemental stage in an endeavor to provide an appropriate setting for the pre-historic. In reality, of course, the movement was forward, in that music was used in a sphere to which it had hitherto been strange. That is progress. A composer who sets 'The Creation' to living music is just as progressive as another who takes 'The Last Judgment' as his theme."

Strawinsky seems to meet his problems according to their nature with an inevitable sense of the fitness of things. He has set, in *Petrouchka*, a story of the Russian fair; the leading characters are puppets; the period, 1830. The music is realistic in tone, in some instances intentionally vulgar.

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It has been pointed out that the themes of the nurses' dance, the dance of the *cochers*, and the Russian dance in the first scene, are founded on Russian folk-tunes. There is all through the piece an implied tone of a village carnival; the accordion and hurdy-gurdy are never very far away, in suggestion at least. The dancer, personified by Mme. Karsavina, trips her lightest measures to the fanfare of a cornet, and Petrouchka sobs out his heart to the empty sky to the screaming of a piccolo. There are tunes, real tunes, the piece abounds in them, and the whole is wrapped in an atmosphere of realism and truth which gives music the tone of originality. Incidentally, there is a triangle solo in the score.

M. Montagu-Nathan says: "The carnival music is a sheer joy, and the incidents making a demand upon music as a descriptive medium have been treated not merely with marvelous skill but with unfailing instinct for the true satiric touch. *Petrouchka* is, in fact, the musical presentment of Russian fantastic humor in the second generation. There is none of the heavy scoring once thought necessary to reveal the humorous possibilities of some particular situation; Strawinsky lives in a

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world which has learned to take things for granted, and his method is elliptical. This perception of proportion in humor is one of the surest indications of refinement, and *Petrouchka* not only testifies to the composer's possession of this quality, but provides an assurance that he has a technical equipment which can hardly betray him."

The fable is one of love and hate in that fanciful domain in which we become aware of the existence of a soul hitherto considered absent from such a corporeal habitation. Among the mingled crowd of merry-makers and mountebanks at the carnival is a showman, practiced in the black arts. In his booth he exposes his animated dolls: the dancer, flanked by *Petrouchka*, the simple fool, and the fierce Moor. The three enact a tragedy of jealousy which terminates in the "shedding of *Petrouchka's* vital sawdust."

The Firebird stirred another cell in the imagination of this young Russian giant. Again he is dealing with a Russian folk-tale, but it is a fairy story this time, not a vulgar story of country life; he has manipulated his orchestra into a thousand gorgeous colors to illustrate it. The instruments

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revolve their tones kaleidoscopically, reflecting the myriad hues with which Golovine and Bakst have invested the scene. The rhythms are exotic; the harmonies and the melodies of the utmost brilliancy. One of the dances of the Firebird has a haunting melancholy about it which seems to have been wafted from the steppes.

The Firebird in the beginning of the action falls a prey to the young Prince Ivan; as the price of her freedom she offers him one of her plumes, which he accepts while she flies away into the soft blue shadows of the night. Dawn breaks, and Ivan finds himself in front of a magic castle, from the gates of which troop out a group of white-robed maidens. They indicate by means of their leader, Tsarevna, with whom Ivan at once falls in love, that he must not venture inside, but as soon as they have left him he rashly pushes back the great gate in front of him. There is a crash and in a moment out rushes pell-mell a huddled mass of slaves, dancers, men in armor, and buffoons, who surround him and drive him dizzy with their chatter. The uproar works up to a *crescendo* of frenzy when the monstrous figure of Kostchei, the Immortal, the lord of the castle, stalks out to quell the din.

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Kostchei has already turned others into stone, but over Ivan he has no power; the Firebird's plume protects him, and on his brandishing it before the terror-stricken god the bird herself appears. At first she makes the crowd dance; then she lulls them to sleep and shows Ivan where the egg containing Kostchei's soul is concealed. He brings it out and smashes it. The old god crumbles to pieces, the stones are brought to life, and the lovers' hands are joined. The character of Kostchei is an important one in Russian folk-lore; he is the subject of an opera by Rimsky-Korsakow. Ralston, in his "Russian Folk-Tales," thus describes him: "Kostchei is merely one of the many incarnations of the dark spirit. . . . Sometimes he is described as altogether serpent-like in form; sometimes he seems to be of a mixed nature, partly human and partly ophidian; but in some stories he is apparently framed after the fashion of a man. . . . He is called 'immortal' or 'deathless' because of his superiority to the ordinary laws of existence. . . . Sometimes his 'death'—that is, the object with which his life is indisputably connected—does not exist within his body." It may be seen that in almost every instance Strawinsky has fol-

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lowed the lead of the "Five" in choosing material closely associated with Russian folk-lore.

There came a reaction after the foundation of the Russian national school by the "Five" (Cui, Borodine, Rimsky-Korsakow, Balakirew and Moussorgsky), and the result of foreign influence was felt. These composers had worked, as most of the Russian novelists have worked, with a sense of the soil from which they had sprung; their compositions are redolent with the mode and manner of folk-music. They chose, in most instances, Russian subjects for their operas. Moussorgsky in particular effected a tremendous revolution in style, developing a manner in which ornamentation and affectation played no part; a tense simplicity and sincerity marked all his music, which never asked alms of conventional rules of composition. (I am willing to say this quite in the face of Mr. Runciman, who recently stated in the "Saturday Review" that there were only two Russian compositions of any importance, a symphony by Borodine and Tschaikowsky's fourth symphony. "Any other two pieces of Russian music are as alike as two mushrooms.") Rubinstein and Tschaikowsky were the leaders of the opposition, whose music is more

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akin to that of other nations. They actually succeeded, for a number of years, in establishing themselves in England, France, and America as the representative Russian composers. And naturally their immediate success was greater, even in their own country, where individuals were trying to free themselves from the curse of their birthright, struggling up from the soil; culture was growing. John Reed tells a wonderful story of a Serbian peasant who, having assimilated some culture (in Serbia *Kultur* is about twenty years old), was reminded by the fields of Beethoven's Pastoral Symphony. So the Russians, learning French, were a thousand times more impressed with *salon* music than they were with the work of their more national composers. Moussorgsky, of course, has only recently been dragged out of his retirement, even now in somewhat modified form. (Neither of his operas is produced as he wrote it; he died leaving the orchestration of *La Khovanchina* unfinished; Rimsky-Korsakow reorchestrated *Boris*—a needless task, perhaps a desecration; he also wrote a good deal of the orchestration of *La Khovanchina*; the work was completed by Maurice Ravel and Strawinsky in a more reverent spirit.) Stra-

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winsky is the new giant upon whom has fallen the mantle of Russian nationalism. His work is based, primarily, on the work of the "Five," all of whom are dead. That he reminds one occasionally of the modern Frenchmen only means that they, too, have learned their lessons from Borodine and Moussorgsky; Debussy's debt to Moussorgsky has frequently been acknowledged; it is obvious if one compares *Pelléas et Mélisande* with *Boris Godunow*. Strawinsky's love of Oriental color is possibly an inheritance from his master, Rimsky-Korsakow.

This young Russian has appeared in an epoch in which the ambition of most composers seems to be to dream, to write their symbolic visions in terms of the mist, to harmonize the imperceptible. Strawinsky sweeps away this vague atmosphere with one gesture; his idea of movement is Dionysian; he overwhelms us with his speed. One critic has referred to him as the "whirling dervish of his art." His gifts to future composers are his conciseness, his development of the complexities of rhythm, and his invention of chord-formation. His use of dissonance is an art in itself. Richard Strauss has employed dissonance in obvious development of Richard Wagner's polyphonic and

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chromatic style. Pushed to its furthest, his system is one of inversion. With Strawinsky the use of dissonance is invention itself. He improvises new chords, while Strauss is taking recognized chords apart to make something else of them. So this new figure stands for something in advance of what has already been expressed. He is, perhaps, the most vital of the modern forces in the music world.

August 6, 1915.

Here is the complete bibliography of Strawinsky's works (the list has been revised and edited by the composer himself): Symphony in E flat, op. 1, 1905-1907 (Jurgenson); *Le Faune et la Bergère*, voice and orchestra, op. 2, 1907 (Belaieff); *Scherzo Fantastique* for orchestra, op. 3, 1907-8 (Jurgenson); *Fireworks*, for orchestra, op. 4, 1908 (Schott); *Funeral Hymn* for the death of Rimsky-Korsakow, op. 5, 1908 (MS.); Four *Études* for the piano, op. 6, 1908 (Jurgenson); Two Melodies (words by Gorodetzaki), voice and piano, op. 7, 1908 (Jurgenson); *The Firebird*, "Conte dansé," 1909-10 (Jurgenson); Two Melodies (words by Verlaine), voice and piano, 1910 (Jurgenson); *Petrouchka*, burlesque scenes in four tableaux, 1910-11 (Russischer Musik-Verlag); Two Melodies (words by Balmont), for voice and piano, 1911 (Russischer Musik-Verlag); *Les Roi des Étoiles* (words by Balmont), for chorus and orchestra, 1911 (Russischer Musik-Verlag); *The Sacrifice to the Spring*, tableaux of Pagan Russia, in two parts, 1911-13 (Russischer Musik-Verlag); Three Melodies (Japanese poems), for voice and small orchestra, 1912,

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(Russischer Musik-Verlag); *Souvenir de ma Jeunesse*, three children's songs for voice and piano, 1913 (Russischer Musik-Verlag); *The Nightingale*, opera in three acts, 1909-14 (Russischer Musik-Verlag).

Recent works include three pieces for string quartet (MSS.), played by the Flonzaley Quartet in New York, November 30, 1915; and a new ballet in two parts, for the Russian Ballet, entitled *Les Noces villageoises*.

Strawinsky has also orchestrated a melody of Beethoven, some of the works of Grieg and Chopin, and the song of the Boyard Chaklovity from *La Khovanchina* of Moussorgsky. With the aid of notes left by the composer he wrote the final chorus of *La Khovanchina*.



Massenet and Women



Massenet and Women

THE name of Jules Massenet, spoken before his tomb, should evoke many memories besides the souvenirs of the delicate melodies he wrote—memories of beautiful and frail women, a long, exotic list, women whom he melodically created in his operas and women whom he selected to sing his heroines.

Xavier Leroux in his preface to the "Souvenirs," in which Massenet carefully describes his life, calls him the *musicien de la femme*. His music is peculiarly feminine—"melodically, sentimentally, sensuously feminine," says Philip Hale. "The Eve of Massenet is a Parisian *cocotte*. His Mary Magdalen is a *grande amoureuse* even after her conversion; a true sister of Thais."

Marie-Magdeleine, Eve, Salome, Manon, the fragrant, who suggested a flower girl in the *Boulevard des Capucines*; Chimène, inspired by the classic Corneille; Esclarmonde, in which the astonishing Sybil Sanderson rose to her fame; Charlotte, who, according to Thackeray, having seen Werther's body "borne before her on a shutter, like a well-conducted person went on cutting bread and

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butter"; the eternal Thaïs, who at first failed to interest the jaded boulevards; the sanguinary Anita, the girl from Navarre; Sapho, who never, in the opera at least, was carried upstairs until Mary Garden portrayed her; Cinderella, the faithful Grisélidis, many times tempted; the Spanish dancer, l'Ensoleillad and Nina in the opera *Chérubin*; Ariane and her companions, Phèdre and Perséphone; Thérèse, Dulcinée, and the Queen Amahelly, all written for that "*grande tragédienne lyrique*," Lucy Arbell: it would seem that every country and every period of history had been searched for a complete survey of feminism. And among the unproduced works which the composer left in a completed form is a *Cléopâtre!*

And what a list of women has sung these parts! Women whom Massenet wholly or partly adored; women for whom he dropped precious dots of ink on paper, instead of buying them pearls in the Rue de la Paix; women for whom, in some instances, he preserved his scores for years. For Massenet was never hasty. He never gave a score to an unworthy interpreter. In this connection it is only necessary to remember that *Amadis*, com-

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pleted in 1890, and *Panurge*, completed in 1910, are not yet produced (1912).

Women reciprocated his love. Louis Schneider, in his biography of the composer, puts it thus: "A woman is like a child; she gives instinctively to the person who loves her. This explains why his incessant glorification of woman made all women like him."

And so, linked indissolubly with the name of Massenet, we may recall the names of those who helped him to build his fame as the feminist composer, those who "created" in the theatre the atmosphere he had devised for his characters. Five names stand out in prominent relief: the charming Marie Heilbronn, the ill-fated Sybil Sanderson, Emma Calvé, Mary Garden, and Lucy Arbell. But there are countless others: Marie Renard, who "created" Charlotte and first sang Manon in Vienna; Marie Delna, who brought *Werther* to Paris; Lina Cavalieri, the first Ensoleillad in *Chérubin*, who afterwards introduced Thaïs and Manon to Italy, and later brought back Thaïs to the répertoire of the Paris Opéra; Lucienne Bréval, who was the first Ariane and Grisélidis; Marguerite Carré, the first Nina in *Chérubin* and who assisted

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in the revival of *Sapho* at the Opéra-Comique; Mlle. Kousnezoff, the Fausta in *Roma*; Mme. Duvivier, Salome at Brussels; Mme. Fidès-Devriès, Salome at Paris; Pauline Viardot, the sister of the great Malibran, who sang Marie-Magdeleine as an oratorio at the Odéon, April 11, 1873; Lina Pacary, who sang one season at New Orleans, who was the first to sing the Magdeleine in operatic form; Julia Guiraudon, the first Cendrillon; Aino Ackté, the first Vierge; Joséphine de Reszke, sister of two famous singers, who "created" the leading feminine rôle in *Le Roi de Lahore*; and Mme. Gallimarié, the first Carmen, who honored the first performance of *Don César de Bazan*. But the list is interminable. What names does it not include? What beautiful woman with a voice of the past three decades does not receive a few words of gratitude in the "Souvenirs"?

Of all the women, however, who have sung the Massenet rôles the one most particularly identified with the composer was Sybil Sanderson, the beautiful California girl, whose career was as short as it was brilliant. Massenet met her at a dinner given by an American friend. She came with her mother, described by the composer as being almost

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as beautiful as her daughter. After dinner Miss Sanderson asked the composer if he would hear her sing. He consented affably, as was his custom—never was there a more gentle man!—and seated himself at the piano.

“You will excuse me,” she added, “if I do not sing your music. That would be too audacious.”

She ended by doing something very much more audacious: she sang the second air of the Queen of the Night from *The Magic Flute*.

The composer's feelings may be adjudged from his remarks in his *Souvenirs*: “What a prodigious voice! Three octaves, either *forte* or *pianissimo*!”

He did not waste any time. His publisher was urging him to set a poem on a Byzantine subject, *Esclarmonde*, to music, and, with Sybil Sanderson in mind, he went to work directly on the score. *Esclarmonde*, in which Massenet pays his tribute to Wagner—the subject suggests *Parsifal* and *Tristan und Isolde*, to say nothing of *Armide*—was produced at the Opéra-Comique during the Paris Exposition of 1889. It was given 101 times before Miss Sanderson went to Brussels.

Before her début Sybil Sanderson was scarcely

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known in Paris. It was rumored among artists that Massenet had written an opera for a fair Californian (she was the daughter of Judge S. W. Sanderson, of the Supreme Court) who was being trained by the master to play the title part, and some few had seen Massenet dining at a restaurant in the Rue Daunou with an American girl, accompanied by a lady who, judging from the likeness of the two, was probably her mother. Then came her debut, and all Paris was talking about La Belle Sanderson, and the extraordinary range of her voice.

Thaïs, the famous opera of the monk and the Alexandrian courtesan, was also written for Miss Sanderson. While Massenet was composing it the singer was appearing three times a week at the Opéra-Comique in *Manon*. It was therefore for that theatre that *Thaïs* was destined. However, Miss Sanderson, like many another artist before and since, moved by a sudden caprice, signed a contract with Gailhard to sing at the Opéra, without taking the trouble to inform Carvalho, then manager of the Opéra-Comique. Massenet did not hesitate. He wrote to Gailhard: "You have the artist; the work must follow her!"

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Thaïs was produced March 16, 1894—and failed! At that time the book was considered a trifle indelicate! Even Sybil Sanderson's popularity could not save it. In 1898 the work was revived with Mme. Berthet in the title part. For this *reprise* Massenet wrote a new scene in the oasis and the scene of the ballet, which have always been omitted in American representations, except in Boston. Lina Cavalieri sang the work in Paris in 1907. Since then it has never been long from the *affiches* of the Opéra, while in America it has become one of the most popular of modern operas, thanks to Mary Garden, who made her American début in the title rôle, and subsequently prevented Lina Cavalieri from singing it in New York. While he was writing *Thaïs* Massenet always kept a tiny figurine on his writing table. This had been made for him by G erome, and served him as his present inspiration.

Here is the tribute that Massenet pays to Sybil Sanderson in his "Souvenirs": "Sybil Sanderson! . . . It is only with poignant emotion that I recall this singer struck by pitiless Death, in her full beauty, in the glory of her talent. Ideal Manon at the Op era-Comique; unforgettable Tha is

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at the Opéra; these rôles identified themselves with her temperament, one of the most magnificently gifted that I have ever known. An invincible vocation called her to the theatre, there to become the ardent interpreter of many of my works; but also, for us, what joy to write operas and rôles for the artists who realize our dreams! . . .

“The silent crowd which pressed on the way of the cortège which led Sybil Sanderson to her last home was considerable. Over it a veil of sadness seemed to hang. Albert Carré and I followed the coffin. We walked directly behind what remained of her beauty, grace, and talent, and Carré, interpreting the feelings of the people about us, said:

“‘She was loved.’”

It is to the “Souvenirs” also that we must turn for a description of the selection of the first Manon. Mme. Carvalho sighed when she heard the music, and breathed the wish that she was twenty years younger, so that she might sing it. Characteristically, Massenet dedicated the score to her. He wanted Mme. Vaillant-Couturier, then singing an operetta of Lecocq’s at the Nouveautés, for the opera.

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"She interested me greatly and, as I thought, bore an astonishing resemblance to a young florist of the Boulevard des Capucines. Without ever having spoken [it must be remembered that this book was written for Massenet's grandchildren] to this delicious young girl, I was obsessed by the vision, and the thought of her was ever with me. This was indeed the Manon whom I had seen, whom I saw always before me as I worked."

The manager of the Nouveautés would not let Mme. Vaillant-Couturier go, but while they were talking Massenet observed that Brasseur had his eyes on a pretty gray hat with roses, which was going up and down the foyer. The hat moved toward the composer.

"A débutant then no longer recognizes a débutante?"

It should be explained that Marie Heilbronn had appeared in Massenet's first opera, *La Grand' Tante*.

"Heilbronn!" I exclaimed.

"Herself."

She reminded him of his first opera and the part she took in it, and in answer to his questions continued: "No, I am rich, and yet, shall I confess

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it? I wish to go back on the stage; I am haunted by the theatre. If I could only find a good rôle." Massenet told her of *Manon*, and that night, at her insistence, he played the music through for her at her apartment in the Champs-Élysées. It was 4.30 in the morning when he was done. She had been moved to tears, and from time to time she would exclaim, "That is my life; it's my life!"

In speaking of Heilbronn's death after the eightieth odd performance of *Manon* the composer says: "Ah, who will tell artists how faithful we are to their memories; how attached to them we are; the great grief which the day of separation brings us? I should prefer to stop performances rather than have the part sung by another."

This in itself is beautiful, but read what he has to say of her successors:

"Some time afterward the Opéra-Comique disappeared in flames and *Manon* was not performed for ten years. It was the dear and unique Sybil Sanderson that revived the work at the Opéra-Comique. She played at the two hundredth. A glory was reserved for me at the five hundredth when the part was taken by Mme. Marguerite Carré. Some

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months ago this captivating and exquisite artist was applauded the night of the seven hundred and fortieth performance. Let me be permitted to salute in passing the fine artists who have also taken the part: Mlles. Mary Garden, Geraldine Farar (so reads the book), Lina Cavalieri, Mme. Bréjean-Silver, Mlles. Courtney, Geneviève Vix, Mmes. Edwina and Nicot-Vauchelet—and how many other dear artists besides! They will pardon me if their names do not come at this moment to my grateful pen.”

Massenet wrote two operas for Emma Calvé, and she appeared in four other of his works. *La Navarraise*, London, June 20, 1894, and *Sapho*, Opéra-Comique, November 27, 1897, were written for her. She also sang Salome in *Hérodiade*, Chimène in *Le Cid*, and the leading feminine rôles in *Le Roi de Lahore* and *Le Mage*.

Adolphe Jullien, the French critic, says somewhere: “Hors de Calvé pas de *Sapho* possible, aux yeux du compositeur.” Yet when Marguerite Carré sang this work, founded on Daudet’s famous novel, at its *reprise* at the Opéra-Comique in 1909, he wrote an entire new scene for her. Mary Garden was the American *Sapho*, and was adversely

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criticised for her forceful acting in the early parts of the play. Yet Jullien writes of Calvé:

“Mlle. Emma Calvé, c'est le cri général, joue et chante avec une ardeur presque excessive le personnage de Sapho, très-difficile à faire accepter à l'Opéra-Comique, en passant de la langueur la plus lascive à la violence la plus grossière, par exemple quand elle injurie ses anciens amants qui viennent de dévoiler son passé au malheureux Gaus-sin.”

Another Sapho was Georgette Leblanc, who also created some excitement with an exceedingly immodest conception of Thaïs.

Anita in *La Navarraise* shares, along with Carmen and Santuzza, the honor of being one of the three rôles of her varied répertoire which Calvé was permitted to sing frequently in this country. It was not long ago that she appeared as Anita at the Manhattan Opera House, where she was succeeded in it by Mme. Gerville-Réache. The work is still in the répertoire of the Opéra-Comique (or was, before the war began).

Although Mary Garden has done more to establish Massenet's reputation in this country than any other singer, and has sung many of his operas suc-

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cessfully in Europe, especially *Manon* and *Thaïs*, Massenet wrote only one part especially for her, the title rôle of *Chérubin*. *Chérubin* was produced at Monte Carlo, February 14, 1905. He is the same youngster immortalized by Beaumarchais and Mozart. He is but seventeen in the Frenchman's opera, but his good looks and audacity make him a veritable Don Juan.

Schneider wrote of Mary Garden in the title part: "She is Chérubin himself, in flesh and bones; she was the joy and delight of the evening. By reason of her slenderness and agility, her easy and graceful manner, with her innocent airs of conquest and her naïve mien of vexation, she is truly the irresistible youth in whose presence all hearts surrender. And to think that M. de Croisset, only the day before, insisted that his Chérubin should not be played by a woman! His, perhaps, but not that of M. Massenet."

It was Oscar Hammerstein's idea that Mary Garden should perform another man's part. Tired, it is said, of the continuous assertions to the effect that all his operas were written about women for women, Massenet wrote *Le Jongleur de Notre Dame*, in which the single female figure, that of

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the Virgin, does not sing a note. It is interesting to observe that this opera is dedicated to Mme. Massenet. It was produced February 18, 1902, at Monte Carlo. Paris heard it two years later. When Mr. Hammerstein decided to produce it in New York he asked Miss Garden if she would sing the part of the Juggler, hitherto in every instance sung by a man. She assented, and appeared in the rôle at the Manhattan, November 27, 1908. Her success in the rôle was immediate and continued.

Massenet, in the "Souvenirs," speaks of the affair: "I was a little frightened, I admit, at the idea of the monk taking off his robes after the play to put on a smart gown from the Rue de la Paix. But before the triumph of the artist I bow and applaud."

Thais introduced Mary Garden to America, and it is in this rôle that she has achieved the greatest popular success of her career. She has sung it everywhere, from Paris to Brooklyn. She sang *Sapho* three times in New York and *Griséïdis* a few times.

"I sang the patient Griselda first at Aix-les-Bains," she once told a reporter. "The King of Greece heard me, and said he didn't think the part

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a suitable one for me. I wonder what he meant!"

Miss Garden has also sung *Manon*, and Prince Charmant in *Cendrillon*.

Massenet's last inspiration was a contralto, Lucy Arbell, who fired his brain to many creations. She sang the rôle of Perséphone in *Ariane*. This goddess of the nether world appeared only in one act of this long opera, but into that act Massenet put the most popular air of the score, the air of the roses, "*Emmène ta sœur*." After *Ariane* had been performed sixty times at the Paris Opéra, Massenet asked her how many times she had sung the part, thinking she would have forgotten.

"Sixty," she answered.

"Wrong," he replied, "for you have repeated the air of the roses every night. You have sung the part 120 times!"

The part of Dulcinée in *Don Quichotte* was written for Lucy Arbell. She sang it both in Paris and Monte Carlo. It is said that before the first performance she spent considerable time learning to play the guitar, so that she could accompany her air in the fourth act herself. *Thérèse*, *Bacchus* and *Roma* all contain parts written with Lucy Ar-

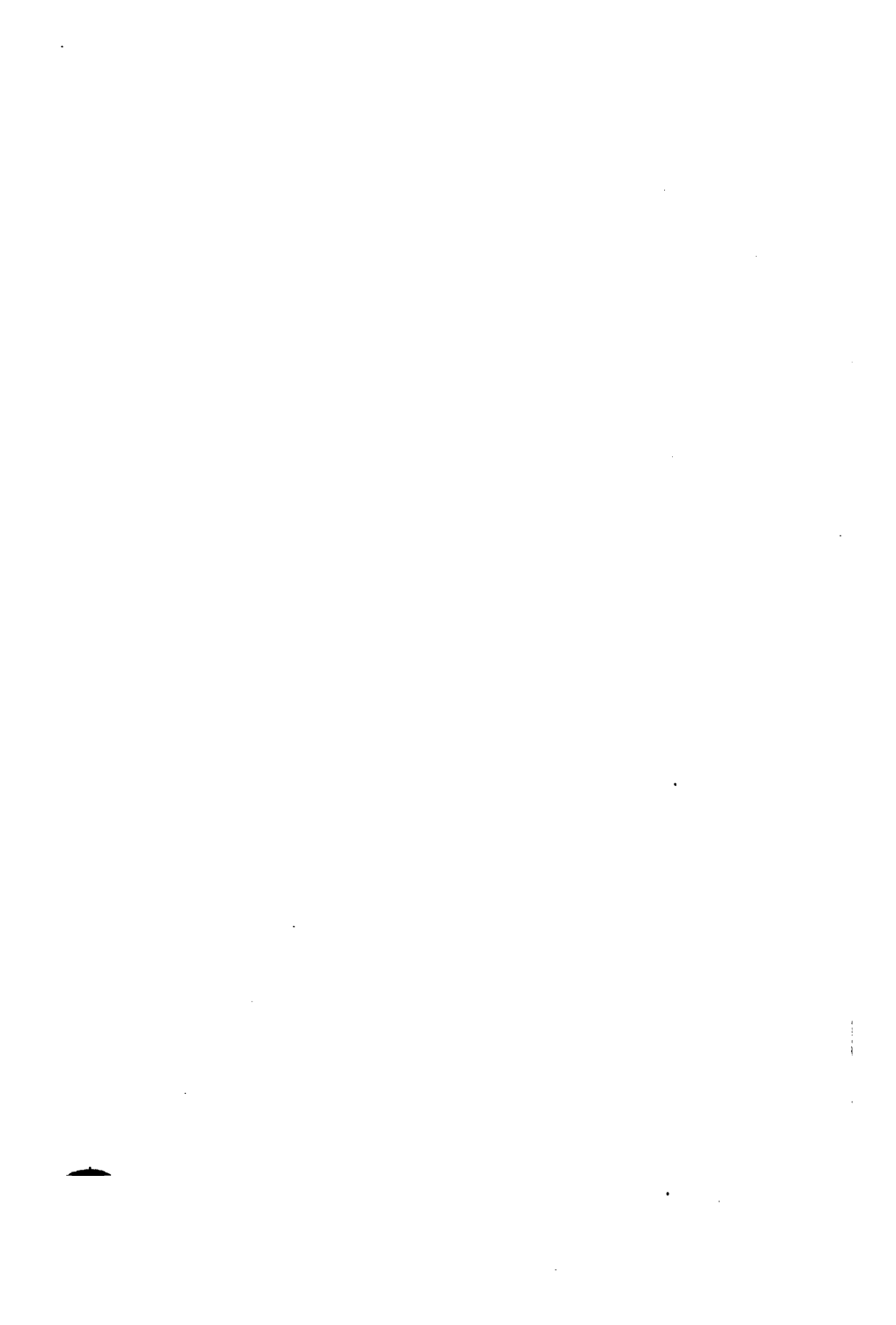
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bell in mind. One cannot do better than close with the picture evoked by Massenet in describing the effect which the music of *Thérèse* had on his interpreter when he first played it to her.

“At the first playing of the score to our *créatrice*, Lucy Arbell, artist that she was, stopped me as I was playing the final scene, where Thérèse, with a cry of fear, sees the terrible cart bearing her husband, André Thorel, to the scaffold, and screams, ‘*Vive le roi!*’ with all her force, so that she may be sure of joining her husband in his death. It was at this instant that our interpreter, greatly moved, stopped me and said, ‘I could never *sing* that scene up to the end, because when I recognized my husband, who gave me his name, who saved Armand de Clerval, I should lose my voice. I ask you to let me *declaim* the end of the piece.’ Great artists alone,” concludes Massenet, “have the gift of divining these instinctive movements.”

October, 1912.

Stage Decoration as a Fine Art



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THE question of the use of "scenery" on the stage is perpetually bobbing up, and as perpetually it remains an unsolved question. Specific instances of the dire harm that the decoration can do to a play may be observed in our theatres almost any week during the active season. To take an example, let us mention one of Mr. Sothorn's Shakespearean productions, which had already been cut to run within the time-limit, but which played from eight in the evening until midnight because the "elaborate" settings had to be changed frequently. The intermissions, as a result, occupied more of the spectators' patience than the play. In another instance, a musical comedy went to pot on the first night because the stagehands could not handle the setting of the second act with enough expedition. As a result, they kept the curtain down for thirty minutes, a fatal length of time in a playhouse devoted to frivolity.

John Palmer, in that book, quotation from which is sheer delight, "The Future of the Theatre," says that this is the age of the "naturalist" drama, and that as a result, when anyone tries to produce a

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“romantic” or “poetic” play, there is an attempt made to wrap up the shortcomings of the performance in elaborate upholstery.

“Why does the electrician or the costumier become so much more important in poetic than in naturalist drama? The electrician and costumier become more important as the author and actor become less competent of themselves to assert their intention. Naturalist authors and naturalist players are masters of their method. The poetic dramatists and players are not. Poetic drama has fallen upon evil times. The dramatist, being unequal to his burden, the artificers in light and hair and turpentine are invoked to help him sustain it. In the mid-twentieth-century outburst of poetic splendor, which will follow the foundation of our national theatre, it will soon be realized how the former degradation of the poetic drama was directly measured by the importance yielded thereby to the subordinate crafts. The quaint superstition of to-day that the limelight man is an important person in the raising of Cæsar’s ghost will disappear when poetic drama of the future is lifted to the level of the naturalist drama of to-day.

“Even to-day, when there comes an actor of

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genius who can present Shakespeare in the solid flesh, it is possible for the least reflective play-goer to realize how little it matters that the limelight is not of the latest and best quality, or that paint upon the scene is spread too thick. We have lately had opportunities, within a single year, of measuring Shakespeare as produced by Mr. Granville Barker against Shakespeare as acted by Sir Johnston Forbes-Robertson. Compare for a moment Mr. Barker's *Twelfth Night* with Sir Johnston Forbes-Robertson's *Hamlet*. Mr. Barker's *Twelfth Night* had every advantage that a producer can bestow. Beautiful costumes against a decorative background, excellent music, an intelligent revival of the necessary apron, a very fair quality of acting, rising in a few instances to an extremely high level of accomplishment—all that the producer as fine-artist has been able to discover was tested and adapted for the occasion.

“Look here upon this picture, and on this.”

“Sir Johnston Forbes-Robertson in his *Hamlet* of 1913 seemed bent upon showing once for all that production matters not at all when great acting is toward. The Drury Lane *Hamlet* of 1913 showed not only that the actor and his author re-

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quire no artistic aid of theatrical haberdashers to make their effect, but also that the actor and his author, if they have as much genius between them as will cover a penny piece, can unite and play clean out of existence the ugliest daubs of the false cardboard naturalism of the late 'nineties.' In Sir Johnston Forbes-Robertson's *Hamlet* was no borrowed grace of the producing fine-artist. Sir Johnston Forbes-Robertson had not even the advantage of the poetic conventions to which his play was originally fitted. He made his dramatic appeal in spite of his conditions, rather than with their assistance. Yet everyone open to the appeal of Shakespeare had to declare that the total æsthetic effect of Sir Johnston Forbes-Robertson's *Hamlet* infinitely outweighed the total æsthetic effect of Mr. Barker's *Hamlet*."

Now, this is the most specious kind of argument. Of course, genius, even unclothed genius, is at all times preferable to mediocrity decked in gauds, but genius properly caparisoned is only added to. If Forbes-Robertson's interesting study of *Hamlet* had been properly set, its effect would have been even more vivid.

Let us take, for instance, the case of the Rus-

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sian dancers. Anna Pavlowa is generally regarded as the greatest of living women dancers. A similar place is assigned Waslav Nijinsky among the male dancers. And yet it cannot be said that Mlle. Pavlowa, with her mediocre (in most instances) scenic and choreographic accompaniments, makes the effect that Nijinsky does surrounded by the Bakst scenery and the elemental spontaneity of the superb Russian ballet. Mlle. Pavlowa's genius creates the utmost enthusiasm; it awakens admiration on every hand; but it would be more compelling were it encased in the beauty which it suggests.

To take another example, let us regard the production of *Boris Godunow* at the Metropolitan Opera House. Seldom, at this theatre, have more dramatic splendors been revealed than Adamo Didur showed us in the title part; and never has such adequate staging been seen there. The scenery and costumes, in fact, were all a part of the Russian equipment used in Paris a few seasons ago. Mme. Fremstad's Brünnhilde in *Götterdämmerung* is an even more indisputable proof of genius than Mr. Didur's Boris (taking into account the Russian's close following of his model, Feodor Chaliapine), but the setting of *Götterdämmerung* at the

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Opera is so unimaginative, so unappealing, so unsuggestive, that one has to forget that before one can focus one's attention on the compelling art of the singing actress.

Of late years the item of scenery has become more and more costly, more and more elaborate. What does it mean, after all, the kind of scenery we see? Who cares about the painted stumps of trees, the ridiculous apple blossoms and the pink drawing-rooms? A little simple staging would effect a much needed reform in the American Theatre, especially if it were coupled with a good play.

It is in Europe that attempts have been made at reform. Some of them have been successful. Gordon Craig has been accounted the inventor of many of the ideas that are prevalent at present, but like many other inventors, he neither had the practical ability, nor perhaps the desire, to put them into effect himself. Stanislavsky, Reinhardt, and even Bakst, have all learned something from him, and have turned his ideas to practical account.

At present Gordon Craig, ensconced in the Arena Goldoni in Florence, is said to be at the head of a great school which shall teach the art

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of the theatre. He is, to be sure, surrounded by a pack of boys with soulful eyes, who wear dirty-greens and call him "Master." These he takes driving occasionally over the hills near Florence in no other vehicle than a coach and four. When this monumental anachronism passes through the Piazza Vittorio Emmanuele, or down the Via Tornabuoni with its crowd from *Patience* seated aloft, the effect on the populace of Firenze La Bella can be only faintly imagined.

Occasionally someone tries to effect an entrance into the school over which this eccentric genius presides and for which he issues pronouncements and catalogues without number, to say nothing of advertisements, and articles in "The Mask," and *af-fiches* which are pasted on the high walls of the Italian and English towns. If the youth who is hardy enough to make the trial succeeds in reaching the great presence he may be deemed a lucky mortal. Mr. Craig observes each newcomer from carefully prepared peep-holes. One look convinces him whether the prospective student has talent for the arts or not; one look alone suffices. Once having made up his mind, nothing changes it.

Robert Jones tried to invade the domain of the

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Craig school last summer, but not once could he get near the Master; not once could he get any more information than that very vague sort which is included in the catalogue. Jones, sick of trying to get on in Florence, went to Germany and now is one of Reinhardt's props and aids. (He has since done good work in New York.)

Another friend of mine who did not care to enter the school had more success. He attained the Craig presence.

"But how," he asked, "do you intend to teach music without teachers?"

"Oh," answered Mr. Craig quite simply, "we shall work away, driving nails into boards, or walking in the country, and when we feel like it we shall sing!"

And so the possessor of some of the best ideas that have come to the theatre in recent years ingeniously steps aside while others, with a view to their more practical use, apply them to their own purposes. (I need not refer to Adolphe Appia here. I leave his case for a separate discussion.)

In the first paragraph of this article I emphasized the practical value of simpler scenery for plays which require frequent or sudden changes;

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but, of course, the artistic side far outweighs that. The kind of scenery we see so much of in New York really deceives nobody. The moment a human being of three dimensions steps on the stage you have that human being posing against badly painted pictures. It is as if one should combine statuary and painting.

The intention in current stage decoration seems to be to intensify the lack of imagination on the part of the spectator. Each part of what is called the scenery of a play is so clearly defined that there is no opportunity for the communication of suggested feeling. The spectator sees at once that he is looking at an imitation of the place, scenery painted to look as much like the place as possible. As a consequence he has the feeling, after the first five minutes, if he has imagination, that he is not in the place at all. When the photographic accuracy wears away the lack of suggestion becomes appalling. The commonplace is scaled.

This is said, taking into account scenery which has scarcely any plastic features—such scenery, for instance, as is used to a great extent at the Metropolitan Opera House, where rocks and rills,

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woods, templed hills and marble halls are painted on flimsy drops. In palaces the architectural features are depicted in the same naïve way, using the word naïve in its worst sense. I believe that scenery like this is intended to represent the real thing just as much as a *papier-mâché* mill which crushes the villain in a melodrama, and it succeeds just as much.

This art, I think, came from Italy. At least, most of the scenery that is painted in this fashion, or the inspiration for it, comes from there nowadays. May it not be possible that it is suggested to the scene-painter by the houses one sees in the small Italian towns, where windows with shutters often are painted on the façade? The fantasy of some of these windows is sublime. Occasionally, persons are painted looking out of them. Dogs sit on the sills; I have seen peacocks. In some instances the whole architecture is painted on the outside of the house—columns, balconies, and all. This is a familiar enough device in Italian churches, and I fancy many Catholic churches in America may show traces of the style.

Carl Hagemann of Germany tries to get away from this sort of thing, just as David Belasco has

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tried to in New York, by making his whole scene plastic, every object built separately inside of a sky drop which runs around from one proscenium arch to the other. If he uses a house or a tree or a bench, it is not painted on the drop. It is built. In the case of interiors his task is easier, of course.

This method of procedure has two distinct disadvantages. In the first place, it takes away all the charm of suggestion, which I think should play an important part in theatrical entertainment, and in the second place, it does away with the possibility of producing a play with more than one scene in each act, unless the producer happens to have a revolving stage in his theatre, an equipment, by the way, which every playhouse in New York should possess. Hagemann gave Goethe's *Faust*, which has countless scenes, by means of a revolving stage. He has produced Shakespearean plays in this manner. Mr. Belasco has followed Hagemann's method pretty closely in some of his recent productions. *The Auctioneer* is a play, it seems to me, which needs this kind of scenery, if anything does. *A Good Little Devil*, on the other hand, would have benefited greatly by more imaginative treatment.

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Gordon Craig, of course, would substitute suggestion for realism. He uses a combination of screens, occasional draperies, and little else, to gain his ends. The lighting is all from above; the natural lighting in this world. If your floors were made of glass under which were concealed hundreds of glaring electric lights, you would get the effect that footlights give on the stage.

It seems to me there are few romantic or poetic plays which would not be improved by Craig's method of staging; and yet he has had little practical experience in putting on pieces. Sets of model scenes for *Hamlet* and *Macbeth* have been exhibited in London. I think Beerbohm Tree used adaptations of one of these at one time. Certainly Craig's *Hamlet* was seen at Stanislavsky's Theatre in Moscow. It is highly probable that Isadora Duncan's dancing background is a fancy of Gordon Craig's. However, little of the practical work of this man has reached the public, except through his books, which are verbose and vague except in spots; and through his conversation, which is usually said to be unilluminated even by flashes.

Craig worked at Moscow for a considerable time,

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however, and it is probable that from the point of view of staging, Stanislavsky now leads the world. He has adopted some of Craig's ideas and fitted them to others until he has obtained a formula for staging every play from *Le Bourgeois Gentilhomme* to *Hedda Gabler*. This theatre is the direct antithesis of the Opéra-Comique in Paris, which has obtained such a false reputation for good staging.

The Opéra-Comique clings stolidly to the Italian method of using flimsy drops, with every detail carefully painted thereon, combined with plastic objects, the whole painted in pastel or primary colors in a manner to suggest a St. Valentine's gift of the 1850 period. The lighting is usually excellent. There are no innovations to be looked for at the Opéra-Comique at present, which holds as fast to its traditions as if the Russian Ballet had never been seen in Paris.

Max Reinhardt and Leon Bakst have utilized Craig's ideas in a measure, but they have altered them to a degree where they have become unrecognizable. Reinhardt is known in New York by *Sumurun*, one of his slightest productions. Still, it gives a good idea of his impressionistic use of

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flat surfaces to create atmosphere and a colorful background to his picture.

Leon Bakst, who has designed many of the famous ballets which the Russians give in Paris and other Continental cities from time to time, proceeds on a more lavish scale. There are no plastic features in a scene by Bakst. Everything is painted on flat canvas, but the barbaric gorgeousness, the impressionistic and suggestive qualities, appeal to the eye as no attempted copy of a real scene could ever do. The number of colors he uses in one scene is almost countless, and yet the combination is always thrilling and effective.

Bakst is better known for his *Sheherazade* than for any other of his ballets, but he also designed the scenery for *Carnaval*, *Thamar*, *Jeux*, *Daphnis et Chloë*, *Narcisse*, *l'Après-midi d'un Faune*, and *Le Spectre de la Rose*.

He has further utilized his supreme talent for decoration in staging the dramas in which that Russian mime, Ida Rubinstein, has appeared at the Théâtre du Châtelet in Paris during recent seasons: Oscar Wilde's *Salome*, Verhaeren's *Hélène de Sparte*, and d'Annunzio's *Le Martyre de*

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Saint-Sébastien and *La Pisanelle, ou la Mort parfumée*.

It was in this last play, produced in Paris in the spring of 1913 for ten special performances, that Bakst expressed himself perhaps more personally than he had hitherto been able to do. Unlimited means were placed at his disposal. He had all the money he wanted and an exactitude in color, in scene and costume, was aimed at which required the dyeing and redyeing of many stuffs, and the searching through countless shops for others.

The scene in the port, with the ship of the blood-red sails painted against a sky of blood-red clouds, in front of which figures garbed in scarlet, vermilion, maroon, rose, mulberry, carnation, and other shades of this brilliant color carried on the drama, will not soon be forgotten by those who saw it. In the final scene Bakst combined black, white, green, orange, rose, and magenta in the most extraordinary manner. In this play, too, he utilized a series of curtains of different colors, according to the scene, which hung half the depth of the stage on either side. And back of the proscenium arch, also on either side, was builded a column of gold, each column divided into numberless small pillars, like

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the mass which supports the ribs of a vaulted roof of a great Gothic cathedral.

This season Bakst has staged two new ballets for the Russians, Richard Strauss's *The Legend of Joseph*, in which Paolo Veronese is suggested in the superb Venetian robes, and *Papillons*, which calls into play the same qualities Bakst had already exhibited in his designs for *Carnaval*.

The new school of scene-painting in Russia is said to have been the inspiration of the painter Wronbel, who, however, did not do much himself, as he died before his ideas were fully accepted. Bakst, Alexandre Benois and N. Roerich took up the work. To Roerich we owe the *décors* of the ballet *The Sacrifice to the Spring*, devised by Nijinsky to carry out the ideas of the cubists, and which aroused storms of hisses whenever it was given in Paris. Alexandre Benois painted the scenes for *Petrouchka* and also those for *Le Pavillon d'Armide*. Serge Soudeikine is responsible for the decorations used in *La Tragédie de Salomé*, and Theodore Fedorowsky painted the extraordinary scenes for Moussorgsky's music drama, *La Khovanchina*. The costumes of the Persian ballet in this opera, of orange, with vivid patches of green and blue, rest in the mem-

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ory. The art of the Russians, it seems to me, has found nearly complete expression. It is impossible for them to go much further in their violent riots of color, their barbaric impressionism.

It is a style particularly suited to the Russian Ballet performances; the effect makes a complete whole which those who have seen it cannot erase from the memory. Its practical application to other branches of theatrical entertainment is more difficult. Certain plays of Shakespeare could be dressed in this manner. Certainly *The Pirates of Penzance* and *Patience* would be superbly fitted by it; so would the music-dramas of Gluck, Wagner, and Richard Strauss.

But there is still another source from which one might set the plays of Shakespeare, leaving aside the best way, which would be to give them in front of screens and draperies in the simplest manner possible. It often has occurred to me while wandering through various European galleries that the work of the early Italian painters might easily be adapted to the uses of stage decoration. Florence is full of this sort of thing, but three pictures I remember especially—three pictures of the fifteenth century, by an unknown painter. They are

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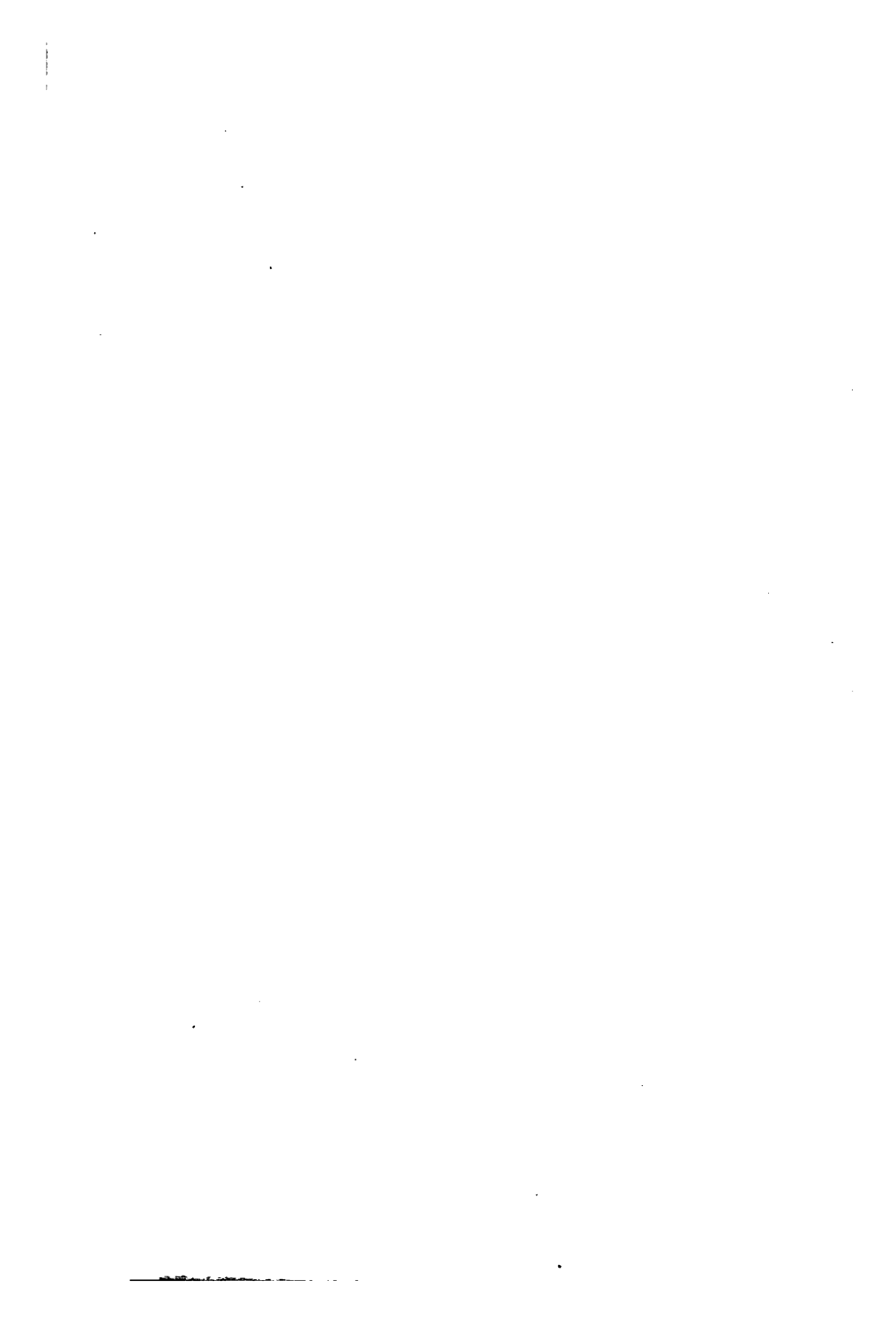
small and they hang, with other pictures between them, in one of the long galleries of the Uffizi. Two of them represent feasts. The simplicity and coloring of the architecture and the costumes would be joyously in keeping with certain plays of Shakespeare. The famous *Marriage of Boccaccio Adimari with Lisa Ricasoli*, in the Ancient and Modern Gallery in Florence, is another example. This train of splendid ladies and gentlemen, with a background of old Italian houses, would make as fine a stage pageant as one could wish for. One of its features is a bench with a cloth thrown over it, which would occupy the entire length of the front of the stage. Over this an awning is spread, under which the procession walks.

Numberless other examples of first aid to a producer who wants to do something new with Shakespeare could be mentioned. I cannot resist a passing reference to the frescos of Benozzo Gozzoli in the Palazzo Riccardi in Florence. The subject of the frescos is *The Gifts of the Magi*; what the artist has really shown is a Medici hunting party. The paintings, in a perfect state of preservation, depict youths in the most exquisite garments in which any actor could hope to disport himself.

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The combination of the greens, the purples, the blues, and the mulberries, all intertwined with the most lavish use of gold, would make such a stage-picture as has not been seen since the days when a desire for beauty and not a desire for photographic accuracy—which always defeats itself—governed those who put drama on the stage.

June, 1914.



Adolphe Appia and Gordon Craig



Adolphe Appia and G. Craig

IN the first edition of "On the Art of the Theatre" (1911), Gordon Craig distinguishes himself by killing off Adolphe Appia. In the 1912 edition of the book (and the subsequent editions) he apologizes for his carelessness in a footnote in which he refers to Appia as "the foremost stage-decorator of Europe." "I was told that he was no more with us, so, in the first edition of this book, I included him among the shades. I first saw three examples of his work in 1908, and I wrote to a friend asking, 'Where is Appia, and how can we meet?' My friend replied, 'Poor Appia died some years ago.' This winter (1912) I saw some of Appia's designs in a portfolio belonging to Prince Wolkonsky. They were divine, and I was told that the designer was still living." There is no other reference to "the foremost stage-decorator of Europe" in this book. Now, Appia's book, "Die Musik und die Inszenierung," translated from his original French text by Princess Elsa Cantacuzène, with eighteen plates from drawings by the author for the settings for the Wagner music dramas, was issued by F. Bruckmann in Munich in 1899. This

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is the book which Hiram Kelly Moderwell refers to in "The Theatre of To-day." Loomis Taylor, last season director of the German works at the Metropolitan Opera House, is also perfectly familiar with it, and he related to me recently how an attempt of his to bring Appia to Germany several years ago failed. There is no mention made by Gordon Craig of *any* book by Appia; Mr. Taylor has read only the German text; and even Mr. Moderwell seems to have been ignorant of the fact that a previous work in French had been issued by Appia.

I have in my possession a small volume (51 pages) entitled "La Mise-en-scène du Drame Wagnérien," by Adolphe Appia, published by Léon Chailley in Paris in 1898. The sale was afterwards (1895) continued under the imprint of the well-known publisher, Fischbacher, 33 Rue de Seine. There is no copy of this work in the New York Public Library, nor in any other library that I have yet consulted. (The later German work is comparatively well known among artists of the theatre.) The only reference to it that I have discovered is in a footnote (Appia seems destined to be exiled to footnotes) in a now little read work by Houston

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Stewart Chamberlain, "Richard Wagner," issued in 1897, four years after Appia's pamphlet had first appeared. Appia dedicated "Die Musik und die Inszenierung" to Mr. Chamberlain in this fashion: "*à Houston Stewart Chamberlain qui seul connaît la vie que j'enferme en ces pages.*"

There is enough interior evidence, without any reference to chronological evidence, to give one cause to presuppose a knowledge on Gordon Craig's part of these books, even the German version of which appeared before Craig had developed many of his theories. The chronology, for the most part, is damning, for even in the short French book (there is a reference in this pamphlet to the fact that it is a condensed version of a longer work which Appia feared might never see publication) one may find not only the germs but also a complete analysis of the principles of modern stagecraft. It was Appia's idea that the stage director should use every effort, *by means of the decoration* as well as by means of the actor, to bring out the secret of the drama he was producing. Appia was the first to see the inconsistency of placing the actor against scenery with painted perspective. It was Appia who foresaw that lighting should be

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used for a more important purpose than mere illumination; that it should serve as the element which binds together the decoration and the figure of the actor, a theory which, as Mr. Moderwell points out, was imagined before a lighting system had been devised to make its practical application possible. It was Appia who discovered that although Wagner had invented a new form of drama, he had not the slightest notion of how to produce it. He is very explicit here. He says, for example, that the action of the ordinary opera is determined by convention, that of the spoken drama by life. In other words, the prima donna of opera must sing her airs in conformation with the beat of the conductor, and she may stand as near the footlights as she pleases. No question of art is raised; nor should there be. You cannot improve (beyond a certain very easily discoverable point) *The Barber of Seville* by superior stage management. In a play the actor tries, as best he may, to imitate life. Between his lines he may take what time he likes to add action to best serve this purpose. In Wagner's *Wort-Tondrama* (the master's own expression) the music is used for a double new purpose. It illuminates the soul of

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the drama, *le drame intérieur*, and it defines to a nicety the *time* of the action ("not the duration of time," says Appia, "but time itself"). In other words, the author-composer wished the illusion of his music dramas to be as complete as that of the great tragedies of the spoken drama, but he has set a definite limit to his characters' actions by composing music which it takes a certain time to perform. He takes all liberty away from the actor without telling him precisely what to do. Thus Tristan and Isolde, after they have drunk the love-potion, are given a number of moments, songless, to express their emotion in gesture; just as Brünnhilde, awakened by Siegfried, must continue to greet the sun until the harp stops playing. Appia foresaw that this action must be controlled by one man, who must regulate it to the last detail. He must arrange the scenery and the lights and the action not only to correspond exactly to the demands of the music and the words, but also to bring out to the utmost the underlying meaning of the work.

For this purpose he has gone into detail with which it does not seem to be necessary to encumber this brief account. In the German work this

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detail is, of course, much fuller than in the shorter French version. The German book, besides, is embellished with engravings which give one a very good idea of the intentions of the artist-author. Appia, for instance, is not content with making one drawing for the setting of the third act of *Die Walküre*; he makes no less than *seven*. These show the varying condition of the lights and position of the characters at different stages in the action. Loomis Taylor has called Appia's idea for this setting "the most beautiful that one could conceive." And yet no one, so far as I know, has ever attempted to use it. The Appia case is an extraordinary one. Here we have a man who has not only developed a complete and invaluable theory for the production of a group of dramas, but who has also gone to the pains to outline to the minutest detail the manner in which his ideas may be carried out, and no one has taken the trouble to follow these instructions in the way he intended. Once his work was complete, Appia seemed content. He has now gone on to something else. Before the war began he had identified himself with the Dalcroze school at Hellerau and had gone far beyond practical present-day stage-

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decoration methods, evolving still newer theories in cubes. However, may we not consider, with the evidence, that Appia was the innovator of the new movement in the theatre?—may we not assure ourselves that without Appia there would have been no Gordon Craig, perhaps no Stanislawsky? His ideas have most certainly been awarded fruition in a thousand forms.

I cannot resist a quotation or two in pursuit of my comparison. "*Das Rheingold* presents three elements: water (the bottom of the Rhine), air (the summit of a mountain separated from Walhalla by the Rhine), and fire (the subterranean forges of the Nibelungs)." Compare this with Gordon Craig's now famous description of the decorations for *Macbeth*: "I see two things. I see a lofty and steep rock, and I see the moist cloud which envelops the head of this rock. That is to say, a place for fierce and warlike men to inhabit, a place for phantoms to nest in." But examples in which Appia exacts of the decoration a promise to play a leading rôle are too frequent to be quoted. One other selection will show how this comparatively (to the public) unknown designer went to work twenty-two years ago to evolve a new form of stagecraft:

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“The last tableau of *Die Walküre* represents a mountain-top, the favorite meeting-ground of the Valkyries. It is purely decorative up to the moment when the god (Wotan) surrounds it with a circle of flames to protect the sleep of Brünnhilde, but from that instant it acquires a deep significance. For this sleep is Wotan’s precaution against the workings of his own desire; that is to say, the god, having renounced his power to direct events, has made the *confidante* of his desire impotent. This fact gives the value of a dramatic rôle to the decoration, since the return of the scene in *Siegfried* and *Götterdämmerung* not only constitutes for the eye a unity between the three parts of the trilogy but also always leads the spectator to the vital point in the drama (Wotan’s will, active or passive).”

Appia’s purpose, in every instance, was, working from the general to the particular, to discover the author’s intention and then to illuminate it. The stage director or decorator, in his opinion, was only the clairvoyant slave in the service of the author’s text. The leaders of the modern movement in the theatre are in complete accord with him on this point as well as others.

August 12, 1915.

Craig

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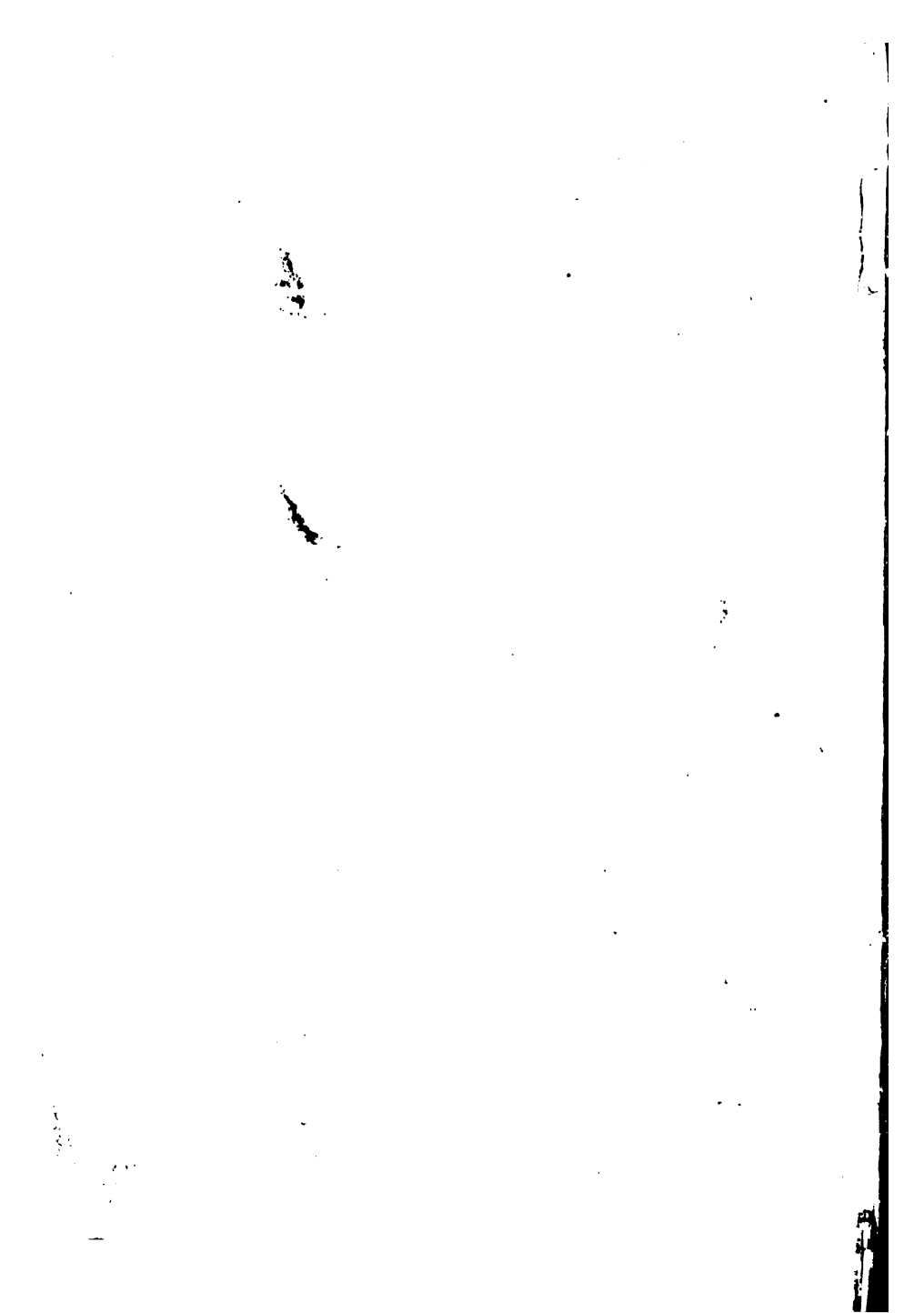
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